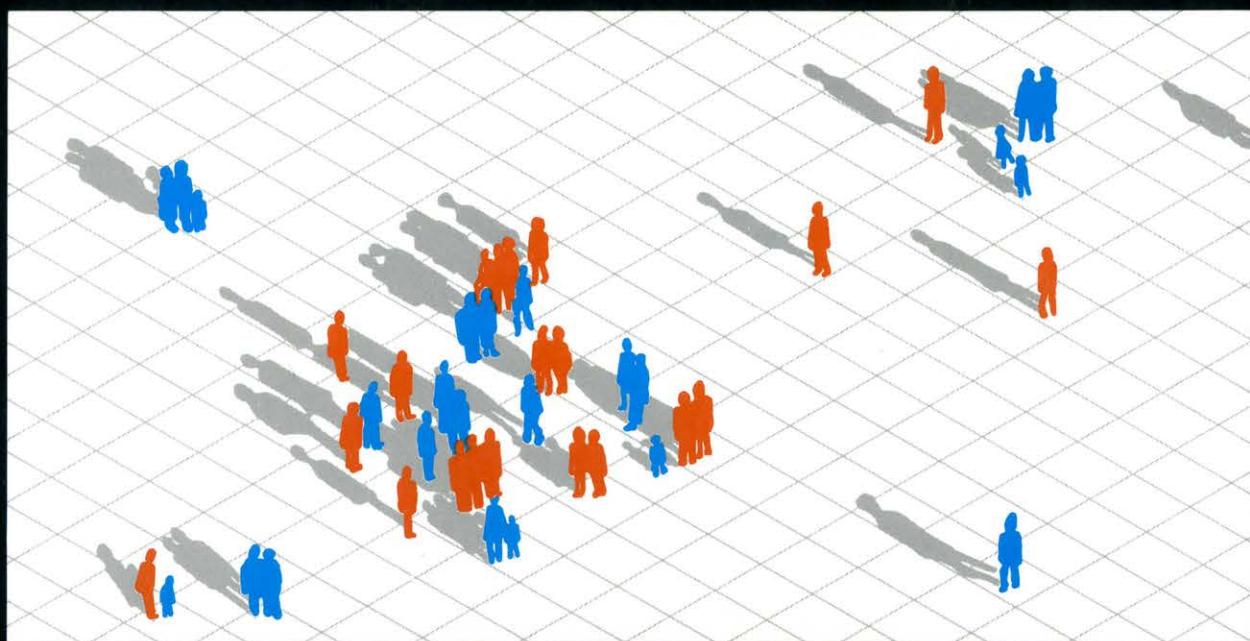


NO LONGER AT ARMS LENGTH



MENNONITE BRETHREN
CHURCH PLANTING IN CANADA

Peter Penner

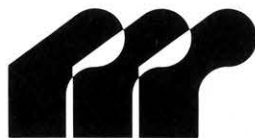
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Hillsboro, KS, U.S.A.

NO LONGER AT ARM'S LENGTH

Mennonite Brethren Church Planting in Canada, 1883-1983

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This Work is
Dedicated
to
Justina
Jake and Leona
Frank and Bertha
Joe and Marie
James and Elfrieda
Ernest and Lydia

Preface

Actually, it was because I devoted more than a year of my life to the subject of home missions in the late fifties that I am returning to it again. During the winter of 1956-57, as a home mission worker at Lindal, Manitoba, I was snowed-in severely. Even so, I managed to round up sufficient primary sources by mail to write an article entitled "An Historical Survey of the Home Mission Work of the Mennonite Brethren Conference in Canada." Then, two years later, living in British Columbia and serving as the chairman of the West Coast Children's Mission, I published *Reaching the Otherwise Unreached: The History of the West Coast Children's Mission of B.C.* Those two works have been used frequently as reference material by persons who have touched on home missions since then. So, in part, those connections and that familiarity induce me now, in the 1980s, in spite of my distance from the Mennonite Brethren epicenter, to undertake the first Canadawide analytical and narrative history of Mennonite Brethren outreach and church planting.

I must acknowledge the encouragement and support that I received, first from Henry Brucks when he was the Evangelism Secretary for the Conference, and then from his successor, James Nikkel. Although I generated the idea for this undertaking on a Canadawide scale, I am grateful for the extent to which the Board of Evangelism supported my research into this subject during the summers of 1981 and 1982. Nor must I neglect to acknowledge the enthusiastic responses from those I have interviewed. About 130 current and former workers returned my questionnaire. As well, Ken Reddig, archivist at the Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies, has been more than helpful. Without his support I would not have been able to put together a respectable bibliography of primary materials. These include board correspondence and minutes, yearbooks, and the loan of duplicate copies of the *Konferenz-Jugendblatt* and the *Mennonite*

Observer. More generally, without the archival interest generated in many quarters, particularly by Abraham H. Unruh long ago, by Herb Giesbrecht, librarian at the Mennonite Brethren Bible College and by the persuasive J. B. Toews, we would not have those resources on hand now.

I would like to acknowledge the kindness shown me by the entire staff of the Canadian Conference during my several visits to that office when it was still at 159 Henderson Highway, and especially Harold Jantz, former editor of the *Mennonite Brethren Herald*. Without the help of Gilbert Brandt, Managing Editor of Kindred Press, this work could not see the light of day. Most importantly, I am indebted to all those readers of the manuscript who kept me from publishing factual errors. As well as much else Susan Brandt was particularly helpful in supplying some names for the list of workers in the appendix. If some errors have crept in, the author alone is to blame.

On the generally held assumption that "one picture is worth a thousand words," it has been decided to make this book pictorial as a doubly enduring record of those who labored in the field. A debt of gratitude is owed to all those who sent pictures and allowed me freedom of selection. These pictures will make it possible to recollect faces as well as facts.

This work is dedicated first to Justina, who labored with me in Toronto and before that at Lindal (where we had four rooms and a path!). It is also dedicated to Jake and Leona, Frank and Bertha, Joe and Marie, James and Elfrieda, and Ernest and Lydia; and to all who felt compelled by Acts 1:8.

Last, but not least, I must acknowledge the patience and excellence with which Mrs. Glenara Anderson of Sackville, New Brunswick, has typed the manuscript.

Peter Penner
October 1985

Foreword

This book, "No Longer at Arm's Length," tells the story of missions in Canada through the eyes of a competent historian who himself has at different times been very much part of the developing fabric of Mennonite Brethren missions in Canada. The author has managed to capture the burden and commitment of the mission "history makers" in the various provinces. One cannot help but admire the many mission pioneers for their concern about lostness, their clarity about personal conversion and their excitement about the gospel. The book brings together the various forces and motivations that make for a dynamic emergence of a denominational mission history. It weaves together a story of strong leadership, active lay involvement, mission oriented Bible School education, and a supportive church community, in the interests of reaching fellow Canadians for Christ.

Change is clearly one of the major themes of the book. Much of the value of the book lies in the author's ability to help the reader see the emerging patterns of change in the approaches to Canadian mission. The shift from a Vacation Bible School and Mission Sunday School approach to a more adult focus of Bible studies and church planting is significant. It is also helpful to see the evangelism pilgrimage in Canada from such a wide spectrum, including summer ministries, local radio broadcasting, church evangelistic crusades and more recently church planting and friendship evangelism.

The shift in approach from concentrating on establishing remote mission stations to penetrating the urban city with

church planting as the goal is well documented. The author has helped the reader to understand that the changes in the approaches to mission by the various provinces has been a maturing process within a diverse Canadian mosaic.

This book will also be of special interest to those readers who have a sensitivity and interest in the development of the Conference structure in Canada. The shaping of a Canadian Conference from first being a Northern District Conference within the United States configuration, to a conference mission structure within a more Canadian identity is fascinating. The author has done the reader a service in articulating the development of the Canadian mission infrastructures that have moved from a nationally directed Canada Inland Mission (CIM) approach to the emergence of provincial Mission and Church Extension committees alongside the Canadian Board of Evangelism known today as Evangelism Canada.

In a typical historian's style the author brings together a document of Canadian detail which gives credits to dates, places and people which are often overlooked or are seen as too insignificant to recount. Rarely will one find such a fine collection of pictures to bring real life faces to the story line. The readers of this book will be surprised at how many of the people pictured and featured may be personally known to them or may even be related. This book is well worth reading.

James Nikkel
February, 1987

Introduction

Until now, no one has undertaken to write the complete story of Mennonite Brethren home missions and church planting in Canada. Many have considered various aspects of the subject over the years, especially, since 1944, the editors of the official papers of the Mennonite Brethren: the *Konferenz-Jugendblatt*, the *Mennonite Observer*, and the *Mennonite Brethren Herald*. Only Elmer Martens has dealt with the church's mission at home, in his essay for *The Church in Mission* (1967), edited by A. J. Klassen. In a very brief compass he managed to analyze past efforts, appraise trends and features, and focus on the issues as seen in the mid sixties. He concluded that "a history of outreach" by Mennonite Brethren should be written. Such efforts became all the more necessary since J. A. Toews in his *History of the Mennonite Brethren Church* (1975) did not deal fully either with outreach at home or missions abroad.

This study is not intended to duplicate the work of those who have written histories of the Mennonite Brethren Church since its origins in Russia in 1860. That work has been done between 1911 and 1975 by P. M. Friesen, J. F. Harms, J. H. Lohrenz, A. H. Unruh, and J. A. Toews. This work concentrates on home missions as defined and understood — in an evolving way — by Mennonite Brethren in Canada. In my opinion, home missions have been largely a voluntarist movement within the church, at least until the 1960s. The focus is therefore more on the worker than on the administrator. In line with that, my first purpose is to tell this story for the layperson, and not only for the scholar. I wish to inform present and future generations, particularly Quebecois and other non-ethnic Mennonites (so to speak), where we came from and how and why the Mennonite Brethren arrived on their doorstep with the vision of an expanded church.

It comes home to every historian during some sleepless night that he must try to be objective; his work must not strengthen existing prejudices; and he must try to be fair to all. A prejudiced, biased, or hagiographical work will not stand the test of time. Because every writer fails somewhat in this category, it is only fair that the reader should know where I am coming from. It will be obvious that I do not believe that evangelism is the church's only mandate. The New Testament is filled with concern for social justice, the non-conforming life, discipleship, and the fruits of the Spirit rather than the gifts. I believe that Mennonite Brethren, along with other Mennonites, are obligated to carry with them the privileges and burdens of their history and Anabaptist-Mennonite heritage. It is the 'cross' we have to bear. Crosses of this kind are escapable only by evading the implications, or by rationalizing our way into new directions. Mennonite Brethren have gone a long way on the evasion route. They appear more non-conformist to everything Anabaptist-Mennonite and more conformist and accepting of everything North American evangelical-fundamentalist than I would wish. Occasionally you may feel this coming

through too strongly. I therefore beg some indulgence because I am writing about the church I love and in which I grew up.

Another consideration for the purposes of this book is that of truthfulness, exactness, and corroboration. Scholars want documentation so that they can check up on the writer. The lay reader should be assured, as the Bible says, that "In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established" (2 Cor. 13:1). Hardly anything has been included without having two or three sources that corroborate or correct or balance each other. For example, the aging interviewee at last takes the cover off a perplexing reference dating from away back. A correspondent verifies that so-and-so was where he said he was forty years ago. For the sake of space and the uncluttered look, I have placed reference notes at the end of each small section, except where direct quotations are made. Since most of the sources for this work (to about 1960) were written in the German language, I have retained choice German expressions, but also explained them. In other places I have simply translated quotations from the German into idiomatic English.

The necessity for brevity in the face of the wealth of material and complexity of detail surrounding the events covered in this book has created a considerable challenge. This is especially so because of my desire to be thorough and to do justice to every important aspect and to all persons. In terms of emphasis, therefore, because objectivity can be achieved more easily for matters thirty years past than for those near to our time, it was only right to try to be more definitive on the pioneering and mission church era, and more tentative on the period since 1960.

Instead of trying to be broadly philosophical, theological, or sociological, this analysis of Mennonite Brethren outreach is told in narrative style, includes anecdotal material, and traces theoretical development when necessary. In fact, there is much missiological material in this work. It seems to crop up everywhere. But I did not start out with a preconceived science of mission. And certainly the brethren did not. They borrowed models of mission when it seemed convenient; they developed theories, sometimes in a hit-and-miss fashion, as they moved from children's work to church planting. Subsequent researchers or missiologists will structure the model differently as they draw out comparisons with the work of other denominations.

Two fundamental questions have for years occupied my mind: 1) how many Mennonites would there be if it had been possible for our Anabaptist-Mennonite theology and, in this case, Mennonite Brethren distinctives, to be presented with just the right balance of persuasion and love to those born into our families; and 2) what has motivated Mennonite Brethren voluntarists and those who elected official committees to devote so much energy to reaching out to the unchurched? That is, why have we lost so many of our kin, and why have we tried so hard to win them back, and, what has compelled

us in more recent years to draw in persons of non-Mennonite background?

There are, of course, obvious surface answers, but what do the records show about motivation? Do Mennonite Brethren have something to prove in the spiritual realm? What made them go on in years of hardship, on the frontier of our history on this continent; what propelled them during the depression of the thirties when life was hard?

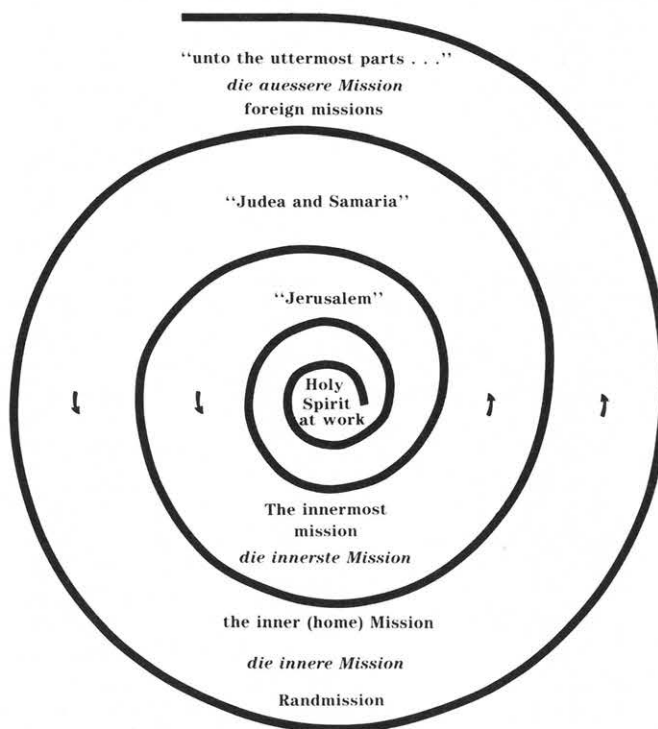
Without denying that there are other catalysts of mission, the most profound clue is likely to be found in the people's implicit faith in the commands of Jesus and the apostles as forever spelling out a forward march and an outward reach. It is deeply felt that the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20), the "love of Christ [that] constraineth us" (2 Cor. 5:14), the proclamation that "ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in Judea and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8) are the great commands to which obedience must be given. And while success orientation appears all too evident during the last decades, now that Mennonite Brethren are assimilated and professionalized, the same spiritual motivation seems fundamental.

This compulsion to obedience, which in North America found both greater freedom of exercise and greater emulative pressures from other evangelical groups, was also a remarkable ingredient in the "spirit of 1860" as manifested among Gnadenfeld Mennonite Brethren in Russia. Long before that, early Anabaptists went

everywhere preaching the gospel and behaving according to the Word (Acts 8:4), though there were many lapses in this obedience between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Obedience to that command and faith in the promises given have acted as a powerful dynamic. The promise of Acts 1:8 that "ye shall receive power" through the Holy Spirit has moved persons of all ages. The young have ventured out into fields unknown, beginning close to home and reaching out into ever widening circles like the spreading rings created by a pebble tossed into water. In home congregations, where the Holy Spirit has been at work, believing young people have begun to work and witness. Once such a person has proved himself or herself, a field of wider service is likely to open. The pictures included in this book show this clearly. From the innermost stronghold of the home congregation, *die innerste Mission*, a person was propelled into what the brethren called "*Randmission*," the rimland just beyond the congregation, the mission to the scattered and lost (or disoriented). This was called home missions, or the inner mission, whereas anything beyond the province or country, a third stage of service, was called *aeussere Mission* or the foreign mission. At first, an *innere Missions-Komitee* (IMK) governed the common work within congregations and just beyond, at least until a home missions board could be created.

The phenomenon of Acts 1:8 as it relates to Mennonite Brethren in Canada may be demonstrated in the following graph:



The following pages will narrate and analyze the home missions story in three broad parts: 1) the movements on the frontier through two major migrations into Canada between 1883 and 1945; 2) the mission church era, 1945 to 1960; and 3) the church planting era, 1960 to the present. We cannot escape the fact that the greatest efforts of men, women, and money have been expended on what we have called the Mennonite Brethren stronghold: the establishment of

conference structures, educational institutions, and home congregations. Fundamental to success was a stable institution from which witnesses went out and to which they returned for identification, orientation, and support. Hence, it will be important to suggest how and when the stronghold has been assailed and perhaps weakened or modified to fit changing times, and how this has affected outreach.

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Abbreviations

Alberta — *Alberta Conference Yearbook*

AMUS — Association of Mennonite University Students

BBS — Bethany Bible School (later BBI), Hepburn, Saskatchewan

BOCE — Board of Church Extension (of British Columbia, Ontario, etc.)

BFM — Board of Foreign Mission (predecessor of MB M/S)

BK — *Bundeskonzferenz* (General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches)

BSSC — Board of Spiritual and Social Concerns

CC — Canadian Conference Yearbook (1946-1983)

CIM — Canada Inland Mission

CL — *Christian Leader* (Hillsboro, Kansas)

CM — *Canadian Mennonite* (1953-1971, Altona and Winnipeg)

CPE — Church Planting Era (1960-)

CS — Christian Service of MB M/S

CSSM — Canadian Sunday School Mission (1927-)

DOE — "Decade of Enlargement" (1964-1974)

DVBS — Daily Vacation Bible School

FSK — *Fuersorgekomitee* (later Committee of Reference and Counsel, CRC or BSSC)

GC/MB — General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches in North America

GLH — Gospel Light Hour

IMK — *Innere Missionskomitee* (Home Missions Committee)

KJ — *Konferenz — Jugendblatt* (Mennonite Brethren publication, 1944-1955)

K-H, *AFCL* — Kaufman-Harder, *Anabaptism Four Centuries Later* (1975)

MBBC — Mennonite Brethren Bible College (1944-)

MBC — Mennonite Brethren Communications (successor to GLH)

MBH — *Mennonite Brethren Herald* (1962-)

MBM — Mennonite Brethren Mission (of British Columbia or Saskatchewan)

MB M/S — Mennonite Brethren Missions and Services (sometimes BOMAS)

MCC — Mennonite Central Committee (1922, Akron, Winnipeg, Kitchener, etc.)

MCE — Mission Church Era (1945-1960)

ME — *Mennonite Encyclopedia* (1959)

MO — *Mennonite Observer* (1956-61)

MR — *Mennonitische Rundschau*

MRep — *Mennonite Reporter* (1971-), successor to the CM)

NDC — Northern District Conference (1910-1945)

NSDC — North Saskatchewan District Conference, or *Protokolle* of the same

RTOU — Peter Penner, *Reaching the Otherwise Unreached: The History of the WCCM of British Columbia* (Winnipeg 1959), 125 pp. illustrated

UCC — United Church of Canada

UM — United Mennonite or General Conference Church (in preference in this book to GC, whose call letters are reserved for the GC/MB)

WBS — Winkler Bible School (later WBI)

WCM — Western Children's Mission (1937-1954)

WCCM — West Coast Children's Mission of British Columbia (1939-1962)

PART I
THE FRONTIER
1883-1945

I

THE MENNONITE BRETHREN CHURCH ON THE NORTH AMERICAN FRONTIER 1883-1918

When Walter Prescott Webb wrote about the "Great Frontier" in *Harper's Magazine*, he was referring to the American frontier, which had provided a great windfall for the expanding peoples of Europe. They came for four hundred years and when the immigrants finally reached the Pacific Coast in the 1890s, those before them had taken up the best arable land. Therefore, they veered north, crossing the forty-ninth parallel into Canadian territories. They spread from British Columbia back to Manitoba. In part, this migration northward was induced by the promoters of land settlement in the era of Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier (1896-1911). These were the boom years when Saskatchewan and Alberta were settled and organized into provinces.¹

Immigration

As is well known, a large immigration of Russian Mennonites to North America had occurred two decades before the closing of that American frontier. About seventeen thousand came in the 1870s, most of them settling on America's plains. The remainder, just under seven thousand, settled in the new Manitoba, on both sides of the Red River. They had left Tsarist Russia because of dissatisfaction with Russification policies. Theirs was an "institutionalized reaction," understood in religious terms, of withdrawal from a worsening situation. E. K. Francis summed up the "public issues" around which a Mennonite migration could crystallize: "the conflict with the Mennonite establishment; the land question; legal and administrative changes attending the liberation of the peasants [1861]; and above all, the deliberations concerning the new [military] law." Having withdrawn or fled in other centuries from deteriorating situations in the Netherlands and Prussia, the Mennonites found it relatively easy to make the trek.² It is also evident that a strong economic motive continued to operate in the midst of religious rationalizations.

When the American frontier of good land closed, Mennonites of that first migration were among those who moved north, mainly to Saskatchewan. A considerable number also traveled from Manitoba to the lands opened by the Canadian Pacific Railroad. As well, about nine hundred more Mennonites arrived from Russia in the 1890s. In the Canadian Mennonite configuration, when the Mennonite population rose to about thirty-two thousand between 1901 and 1911, the biggest change came in Saskatchewan. Its Mennonite population had quadrupled.³

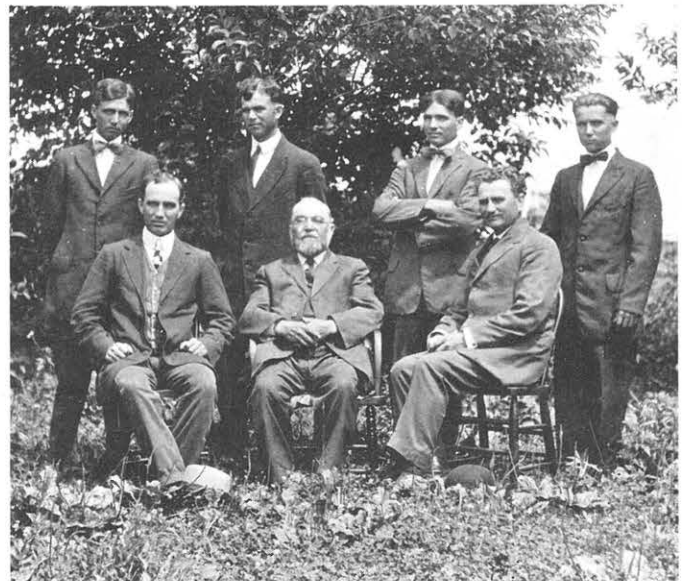
Mission to Manitoba

Among the Russian Mennonite immigrants of the 1870s were about two hundred Mennonite Brethren families, but none of these settled in Manitoba. They settled mainly in Kansas, Nebraska, Minnesota, and South Dakota. As North Dakota and Montana achieved statehood, some Mennonite Brethren gradually moved north and west until they reached

Manitoba and the lands drained by the Saskatchewan River system.

By leaving the mother congregations, founded as recently as 1860, these Mennonite Brethren laid the foundations for a new work in America. When they first crossed the forty-ninth parallel, they came not to stay but to visit relatives or to evangelize. The Mennonites who had settled in the two reserves east and west of the Red River in the 1870s were organizing themselves into an ordered church under a variety of names. Most of them were conservatives from Chortitz in Russia. They remained untouched at least until the early 1880s by the new life experienced by the Mennonite Brethren in Russia or the General Conference of Mennonites in America, also founded in 1860. Both groups were concerned about the spiritual well-being of their "brethren according to the flesh," a term frequently used.⁴

In 1883 when the Mennonite Brethren first spoke of sending evangelists to Manitoba, a fruitful field was already prepared for them in the village of Hoffnungsfeld, near Winkler. Two younger men, Jacob Hoeppner and Franz Sawatsky, laid the groundwork for revival there. They were not Mennonite Brethren, but were men who had received new life. They took the people from the villages of Hoffnungsfeld and Schanzenfeld, mostly *Reinlander* (Old Colony) Mennonites, with them into the new *Bergthaler* group. Hoeppner, particularly, had introduced changes such as advanced ideas of singing, which prepared some for a split from the more conservative stock. Therefore, when



The Heinrich Voth Men (1916), Bingham Lake, Minnesota. Seated: Missionary to India John, Elder Heinrich who preached and baptized in Burwalde in the 1880s, Henry S., Reiseprediger and Conference moderator later. Standing: Isaac, Jake, Peter and Abe (Isaac and Abe are the ones who left Bingham Lake for Winkler in April 1917 to evade the draft).

Heinrich Voth, a member of the Mennonite Brethren church at Bingham Lake, Minnesota, and David Dyck from Kansas, arrived there in 1884, they found people who were already believers. Actually, they anticipated *der Anbruch eines Fruehlings* ("the coming of spring") for the Mennonite Brethren movement in North America. So they reported to the *Bundeskonferenz (BK)* at the next occasion.

For some time there appeared to be fraternal relations between the *Bergthaler* in those villages and those who had joined the Mennonite Brethren through the preaching of Voth and Dyck. Few hindrances were placed in the way of forming a Mennonite Brethren group. When N. F. Toews, a United Mennonite preacher from Minnesota, came as home missionary and *Reiseprediger* in the 1890s, he could not forestall that movement.

Ironically, Toews may actually have been influenced more than Voth by the evangelistic movement and revival methods symbolized by D. L. Moody and the school he founded in Chicago. Both men believed in radical conversions and were equally concerned to counteract the influence in the villages of the Mormons and Swedenborgians. It seems only one major difference existed between Voth's emphasis and Toews'. That point was baptism by immersion and the matter of church authority. The Mennonite Brethren gained a foothold in southern Manitoba when they did, largely because Voth, an ordained elder, was empowered to baptize immediately and did so in 1886. Toews, who came later than Voth, did not have the authority to baptize.⁵

Voth's conception of his task was much more formed by the conference system already established in Russia. In 1872, the Mennonite Brethren organized a Home Missions Committee (IMK), which sent out five itinerant preachers, fixed their remuneration, and requested them to keep diaries of their activities and to report back at the next occasion. That system was taken to America where in 1883 the chief item of *Bundeskonferenz* business at Henderson, Nebraska, was to support *Reiseprediger* for the trip to Manitoba. Despite repeated urging that they should actually move to Manitoba, neither Voth nor Dyck would do so at that time, and neither did until much later. But Voth, who was most in demand of all the American brethren who might have been sent, travelled to Manitoba for Bible studies and evangelism each year. He was remunerated at thirty-five dollars a month plus travel expenses.

The fledgling group of Mennonite Brethren, who met first at Burwalde before moving to Winkler, found their first resident leader in Gerhard Wiebe. He came from Russia to settle in Winkler in 1888, the very year the first Mennonite Brethren church was organized in Canada. David Dyck succeeded him in 1895 when he moved his family to Canada from Colorado. Dyck was followed in 1906 by Johann Warkentin, the first indigenous leader, one of the Hoffnungsfeld converts of the 1880s.⁶

The Northern District Conference

As the Saskatchewan Mennonite population quadrupled and new Mennonite Brethren congregations were formed around Rosthern, Hepburn and Herbert, Gerhard Wiebe was first invited to serve there in 1893. He and David Dyck itinerated by invitation until about 1902 when a *BK* coordinating committee prepared the groundwork for evangelistic campaigns

and *Wortvertiefung* ("in-depth Bible studies") among the growing number of communities.

Several settlements consisted of Russian-speaking Mennonite Brethren, in part the fruit of witnessing among Russians before the migration of the 1870s. They came to Saskatchewan between 1897 and 1903 and settled along Eagle Creek, west of Saskatoon and south of Blaine Lake. As



Eagle Creek Russian M.B. church.

Jacob Kowalenko and his wife Chimka (about 1920). He is the father of my correspondent and was treasurer of the congregation for many years.

is well known, Doukhobors also came to Canada at the end of the century, assisted by the famous Leo Tolstoy and the Quakers of England. Some settled around Blaine Lake, north of Hepburn.⁷

The next stage in Saskatchewan's polity development followed in the first decade of the 1900s. Distances from Mountain Lake and Hillsboro were simply too forbidding for people from Hepburn and Herbert. These brethren had no desire to separate from the *BK*, but they realized that a division of labor was inevitable and perhaps desirable. Following annual deliberations, it was resolved that conference unity could be preserved by retaining central control of foreign missions, publications, and education interests, while district conferences, particularly Saskatchewan's, should take up *innere Mission*, essentially the mission to the frontier.

Thus was born in 1910 the Northern District Conference (NDC) consisting of two Saskatchewan districts. It was this NDC that the two Manitoba congregations of Winkler and Winnipeg joined in 1913. Also, by mutual agreement, the Russian brethren organized their own Conference in 1908. Elder David Dyck ordained their first ministers, Luka Krowchenko and Appolon Malashenko. They served the two congregations, as mentioned, at Eagle Creek and Petrofka. Malashenko, particularly, had been persecuted in Russia for the stand he had taken as a convert from Orthodoxy.

Though many Mennonites knew Russian very well, and could have integrated them as well as the Québécois were integrated later, Russian participation required translation of proceedings, a matter that was more laborious in those days. The truth of the matter was, however, that they "did not feel as bound or loyal as the German-speaking brethren to the Mennonite Brethren Conference." The next chapters will have more about this association.⁸

Reiseprediger

Among *Reiseprediger* who served this early NDC were Henry S. Voth, Elder Voth's son; Hermann Fast, who worked



Saskatchewan Reiseprediger and Teacher Hermann Fast (1908). He helped both Russians at Eagle Creek and Doukhobors at Petrofka and Blaine Lake.

among the Russians in Saskatchewan and also at Kief, North Dakota; and C. N. Hiebert, a young colporteur for the British and Foreign Bible Society who took up residence near Hepburn in 1909. These are only three of many who could be chosen, but they contributed uniquely to home missions as it was understood then. Each hoped to prevent seepage

from the ranks — a very real fear in this period and in the time between the wars — and to protect the expanding Mennonite frontiers from Russelites, Adventists, and Mormons. Armed, as in Russia, with the Bible and the *Dreiband* (a hymnbook of three parts), these itinerants were usually paid the equivalent of a farm hand. They preached biblical messages that inculcated the conviction that *Lehre* (doctrine) and *Leben* (life) should be coordinated.⁹

For forty years beginning in 1901, and as one of the few full-time itinerants, Henry S. Voth early in his career crisscrossed the forty-ninth parallel. Like most popular preachers, he had a simple and anecdotal style. He preached persuasively, seeking for decisions. He was doubtless too young at age twenty-three to determine the conference structures, but he was a successful evangelist. Though he took more speaking engagements in the American than in the Canadian circuit, he concentrated on Saskatchewan in 1902 and again from 1905 to 1907. In those four years he gave 233 sermons in Saskatchewan territory alone. His travels in Manitoba and Saskatchewan increased after World War I, when he had taken up residence near Winkler.¹⁰

Hermann Fast's career is more elusive than that of Voth or Hiebert, but he seems to have played a crucial role in the early Russian-German Mennonite Brethren configuration involving Eagle Creek (later Arelee) and Hepburn. Known (along with J. F. Harms, apparently) as "the man with the beard," Hermann Fast had more education than most *Reiseprediger* of his generation. He was born in 1860 in Gnadenfeld, where the Mennonite Brethren church had its birth. He was educated there, after which he also spent three years at Saint Crischona in Basel. Married to a Russian woman of Orthodox background, he moved to Canada in 1901 where he immediately found employment among the Doukhobors of Blaine Lake, in his chosen profession as a teacher.



Reiseprediger in a Doukhobor village, Saskatchewan 1905. Henry S. Voth, with Jake A. Kroeker, Winkler. Picture taken by F.J. Berg.

Before he took up the cause of the Russian Mennonite Brethren, Fast achieved some notoriety for his significant contribution to the founding of the German-English Academy of Rosthern. What is more, he was its first teacher,

but taught only for one year. His only disqualification was his inability to speak English. Yet, as much as anyone, he had insisted that the Academy was needed to prepare teachers with professional standards for Mennonite communities.

Fast began to itinerate among the Russian-speaking people in about 1906 and continued in this ministry until the end of World War I. For seven years he was editor of *Golos* ("Voice"), a Russian-language inspirational paper published in Kansas. Despite this talent, some North Saskatchewan District Conference brethren balked at suggestions that he should be ordained or remunerated (perhaps because of his unorthodoxy, having served in Russia as a Baptist minister). Nevertheless, he was most acceptable to the Russians and helped them in 1908 to lay the foundations of a long-lasting association with the Mennonite Brethren Conference. Fast seemed able to cope with Russian combativeness, a character trait later noted by D. B. Wiens and by F. G.



Eagle Creek Russian M.B. Church.
Luka Krowchenko, his wife Barbara. Elena, wife of Michael J. Rabuka deacon c. 1945.

Thiessen in Vancouver. Fast was most concerned to prevent them from falling into the pitfalls of Adventism, whose heresy presented a threat at that time. For example, the Eagle Creek treasurer, named "Big Mike" Rabuka, went over to the Adventists in 1918.¹¹

Cornelius N. Hiebert, one of the early Herbert students, also attended the Bible Institute of Los Angeles (BIOLA) for the years 1919-22. He was a colporteur and itinerant in Saskatchewan and Manitoba until 1925, when he became a city missionary in Winnipeg, as will be shown. He endeared himself as a relatively young man by his story-telling style. His outstanding gift, however, lay in personal evangelism and home visitation. His oldest daughter has written of him, "Like John Wesley, he felt the world was his parish. . . ."¹²

As would be expected, Saskatchewan benefited from the services of many other brethren qualified to itinerate. David Dyck, ordained elder, served faithfully from his home in Waldheim, and remained an influence until after World War I. H. P. Janz (1886-1932), one of the educated men, lived in Main Centre. He was one of Tabor's first students, and also studied theology at Rochester's Baptist Seminary. He served as teacher, minister, itinerant evangelist, and as an early writer for the *Zionsbote* and the *Mennonitische Rundschau* (MR). There were many others who influenced the church at that time, including those who held longstanding

positions on home missions committees, but who were not necessarily outreach-oriented. All were, however, concerned with strengthening the Mennonite Brethren stronghold and maintaining the German language. Except for people like John F. Harms, Hermann Fast, and H. P. Janz, they did not have formal theological training. They were self-taught men who had a cautious perspective on what it meant to receive "power" and "gifts" as promised in Acts 1:8 and I Corinthians 12. Nevertheless, they were able to relate to the farming communities in the days before the Bible school movement.¹³

City Mission

Besides the rural frontier in Saskatchewan, the fledgling Canadian Conference soon had an urban frontier to consider. The American brethren had decided Minneapolis, Minnesota, would be the focus of their city mission. In Canada, Winkler church took an early interest in helping a small group of believers who lived in Winnipeg's North End. In 1907, Johann Warkentin, the leading minister at Winkler, began to serve the group intermittently. He provided the first building and organized them as a church two years later. The Mennonite Brethren church grew rapidly, though most of the members were more German than Russian Mennonite in origin.

The two persons who did most to build up this congregation were William Bestvater and Anna Thiessen. William moved his family from Mountain Lake to Winnipeg in 1913, when the NDC appointed him as city missionary. He proved to be an excellent Bible teacher and encouraged music making in



Herbert Bible School and Winnipeg City Mission (1921) (Taken in Winnipeg).

The William Bestvater family.

Standing: Arthur, Henry, William J., and William Jr.

Seated: Katherine, Anna Rose, Helena, and Mary.

Wm. Bestvater served as Winnipeg city missionary from 1913 to 1921, and Herbert BS to 1930.

the church, an element that proved significant later. Anna Thiessen, one of the first Herbert students, joined the mission in 1916. She taught Sunday school, made home visitations, and started a sewing school for young girls. Both Bestvater and Thiessen were supported by collections taken at harvest festivals throughout the NDC. With this sort of

help, they built a commodious basement structure in 1917.¹⁴

Evangelical Renewal

Another development began before 1914 that characterized the Mennonite Brethren for decades. That was the concern to provide opportunities for intensive Bible study. Outstanding among schools that influenced this trend and helped to bring the fervor and methodology of the Moody/Sankey revivalism to Mennonite communities was Moody Bible Institute, and also The Bible Institute of Los Angeles (BIOLA), led by Reuben Torrey, a strong proponent of personal witnessing. The evangelicalism/fundamentalism that characterized MBI and BIOLA, joined to the pietism and biblicism that the Mennonite Brethren brought with them from Russia, cast the Mennonite Bible school movement into the North American mould.

While many Mennonite Brethren found the emphases in those schools very appealing (and C. N. Hiebert and many others went there), there was also an early desire to provide a Canadian school for Mennonite Brethren youth. Saskatchewan brethren raised the question of establishing such a school in 1910. They agreed to do so, and found John F. Harms, a farmer-preacher who lived near Herbert, as a prospective teacher for the school, which was to be started in 1911. Harms must have been well known to Canadian leaders because of his editorship of both the *Zionsbote* (1885-1906) and the *Mennonitische Rundschau* (1880-86), responsibilities he had taken on shortly after his arrival in America. He had come to Canada's west in 1906 in search of health for his wife and, after moving about for several years, had settled at Flowing Well to farm. His only theological education came from two years' attendance at Neppersville Evangelical Seminary in Illinois. He made great sacrifices for young



Herbert Bible School's founder John F. Harms.

people in the Herbert district who showed interest in Bible studies. Margaret Epp wrote,

Mr. J. F. Harms, principal and sole teacher, left his family on the farm that winter, while he occupied a tiny six-by-six cell, also unheated. One has to be an enthusiastic believer in Bible schools to adapt to such circumstances. Mr. Harms was so thoroughly convinced, he personally and secretly made interest-free loans to four of his students the following summer, so they could return for a second winter.¹⁵

Associated with Harms was Hermann Fast. Together they formed what A. H. Unruh called *eine Wanderschule* (a mobile Bible school). In this way they brought the first week-long Bible classes to North Saskatchewan churches in 1911 and 1912. For short periods of time, Fast and others taught at Herbert until William Bestvater came in 1921 to give more stability to the school. Fast also taught disciplined Bible classes to Russians at Petrofka. J. J. Kowalenko recalls that he heard Fast's lectures on the Pentateuch in 1917-18. The great aim of these brethren was to train their own youth for Sunday school teaching and evangelism. Although the outreach motive was not as yet too explicit, it was understood by Anna Thiessen, for example, that she had an obligation to visit, teach, distribute tracts, and be prepared generally "to give an answer to him that asketh. . . ." The fundamental aim, of course, was to deepen spiritual life, make good church members, and help to retain the German



Herbert Bible School, 1927.
Bernard Sawatzky and George W. Peters as students.

language. Except for the language question, these goals remained constant in the Bible school movement. Looking back, there are those who think that the period from 1890 to 1935 was a time of unusual "evangelical fervor." That fervor, reflected in the Bible school movement, which really flourished in the next period, was restricted in its outreach only by the "cultural boundaries" into which the Mennonite Brethren were locked.¹⁶

Vanderhoof

It would not be necessary to touch on World War I as far as home missions is concerned except that the first leading *Reiseprediger*, Heinrich Voth, took an unusually strong pacifist position, which, for him personally, had unfortunate results. Once America declared war in April of 1917, two of his sons, Isaak and Abram, along with those of many other families, left Minnesota farms abruptly and departed for Winkler. There, during the summer, they joined other American Mennonites who were prepared to move westward to the newly-opened Nechako River valley, at

Vanderhoof, British Columbia. Though Voth was criticized for the removal to Vanderhoof, he defended the colonization attempt and moved to Vanderhoof himself in 1918. The Voth family believed very strongly that no Christian could participate in the War. One either evaded the draft or went to jail. If his sons had in fact been extradited, he would not have gone, and the trek to Vanderhoof might have been even more shortlived. As it was, in protest against what the family thought were compromises made by the Mennonites of Manitoba who "subscribed a million dollars to the recent Victory Loan," H. Voth moved to Vanderhoof, only to die there rather suddenly in December, just after the war ended. The Mennonite Brethren colony and church at Braeside soon became discouraged, and the settlement broke up within two-and-a-half years. The Mennonite Brethren did not return to Vanderhoof officially until the early 1950s.

By contrast, Hermann Fast's two sons joined the armed services in 1917, and were both killed in action. Yet Fast had left Tsarist Russia in 1901 to escape that eventuality for his sons.¹⁷

II

THE THRESHOLD OF HOME MISSIONS IN CANADA, 1918-1939

After the first years of demobilization and distress following World War I, prosperous years followed between 1923 and 1929. Then, unfortunately, came the crash of 1929. The depression was catastrophic. Prime Minister R. B. Bennett's conversion in 1935 to a "new deal" came too late. The labor revolt of 1919, felt acutely in Winnipeg's North End, appeared mild when compared with the agrarian revolt of the "dirty thirties." The land was denuded of much topsoil because of the prolonged drought. Many people, including Mennonites, moved east or west. That exodus, a story often told, continued until well into World II.¹

Immigration Again

The second great influx of Mennonites to Canada came just in time to feel the full effect of the depression. Twenty-one thousand arrived between 1923 and 1927, and a few more arrived in 1930. Whereas before World War I Mennonites had tended toward settlement in Saskatchewan, the new migrants scattered widely from Ontario to British Columbia. Before 1923, there were two congregations in Manitoba and eighteen in Saskatchewan. By 1932, sixty-one "*Gemeinden*" were scattered from Vineland to Vancouver. Coaldale and Yarrow came to rival Winkler as centers of influence within the enlarged conference system. *Kanadier* and *Russlaender* were the nicknames applied to the people of differing historical experience, though for many Mennonite Brethren it would have been correct to call the *Kanadier* Americans. Many, in fact, including some members of the Voth family, never became Canadian citizens.²

Reiseprediger

During the inter-war years, under the principal conference leadership of Henry S. Voth, the expanding NDC inherited those home mission concepts that had been tried and tested in Russia and on the frontier. The role played by the *Reiseprediger* was all-important. Representatives of *Kanadier* and *Russlaender* came forward to hold the expanding Conference together theologically in a time of preparation for extensive outreach. The voluntarists would in fact force the pace of that outreach, and congregations would have to respond by offering Bible courses to train them.



Reiseprediger and Saskatoon City
Missionary Henry S. Rempel (1952).

When we last mentioned *Reiseprediger*, we pointed to C. N. Hiebert as a much sought-after visitor who, while he served in Winnipeg, also did much itinerating. H. S. Voth also continued unabated, especially as he became the leading Conference man in the NDC. In addition to these men who served with distinction and credibility for many years, there was another man who became popular in the Mennonite Brethren church, namely H. S. Rempel. Moreover, there were two Bible teachers of note, Abraham H. Unruh and Henry H. Janzen, who were instrumental in welding together the Conference. They also gave leadership, each in his way, to home missions.

Heinrich Schlabach Rempel (1882-1979) will always be remembered for his many years as city missionary in Saskatoon. At the age of thirty, after teaching for ten years in the East Reserve, he joined the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren and was called to ministry in that denomination. In 1924 he moved to Winkler where he joined the Mennonite Brethren church. Five years later he joined C. N. Hiebert in Winnipeg and served an apprenticeship as city missionary until 1935. According to his preaching records, Rempel began to travel widely during that period. According to his widow (Anna Neufeld Rempel, his second wife), he thought he was made for traveling, and his favorite saying was "have bike, will travel!" A truly self-taught man who never attended Bible school, he became a much-loved preacher. His preaching appointments within a span of forty years, rival those of Voth's within fifty. In the early 1930s, brethren from British Columbia wanted him for the Vancouver mission, and in 1948 Kelowna brethren wanted him. When he actually retired in 1969 at age eighty-seven, he returned to Steinbach and the area where he had grown up. He continued even then to keep up his considerable correspondence with former converts. Unfortunately, none of these letters have been preserved.³

Many *Russlaender* also did yeoman service on assignment. But one theologian, largely self-taught, was most in demand throughout the NDC and the BK from the time of his arrival in Canada. Abraham Unruh came from Russia in 1925 and was a founding teacher of the Winkler Bible School along with John G. Wiens and G. Reimer. Without detracting from the others, Unruh seems to have been the chief magnet drawing students from across the expanding NDC. As these students returned to take leadership positions in their churches, they naturally tended to invite Unruh, the preferred Bible expositor. He was intellectually witty and believed that humor should also teach. He was never arrogant, though he stood head and shoulders over others. He moved from WBS to the Mennonite Brethren Bible College in 1944. More than any other man he kept the Mennonite Brethren church on track theologically. He gave the Canadian churches what were called "*die uebertlieferten Ordnungen*," that is, the theological inheritance from Mennonite Brethren and Anabaptist history. As David Ewert has written: "Our American brethren got the impression that the theology of all Canadian Mennonite Brethren was that of Abraham

Unruh." Through his annual Bible expositions at the North End (later Elmwood) Church for twenty-three years, his influence went far beyond Mennonite Brethren circles. He has been given the supreme accolade of "inter-Mennonite teacher."⁴

About the time Unruh was helping to launch the WBS, a young couple, Henry H. Janzen and his wife Katherina, arrived in Kitchener, Ontario. Even though Henry was converted to a life-giving faith only in the year of his arrival, 1925, within a few years he had preached his first sermon in Kitchener and had begun to receive invitations to speak. First he served small groups like those in New Hamburg and Hespeler. Life was not easy. For eight years he worked in a mattress factory. Then, in 1932, he was elected Kitchener's church leader and also Ontario's first Conference leader. He began to travel widely.

While we cannot recount his entire career, Janzen is important because, for the sake of conference unity and to influence the cause of missions, he took the Ontario Conference into the General Conference (BK) in 1939. Later he brought the Ontario Conference into the NDC (CC) in order to benefit from the founding of MBBC. He also became a directing force in the mission to the Russian brethren, among whom he had begun to itinerate as early as 1934. More will be said of this aspect of his ministry in our discussion of the Canada Inland Mission. He associated more closely with Unruh, who is reported to have stated before 1935, that that man Janzen "*Ist unverschämt begabt*" (that he was unusually gifted). Much later, Katherina Janzen wrote that the two made "*ein gutes Team zur Wortvertiefung*" (a good team for Bible conferences). Those who remember Janzen's extemporaneous exposition in the old *Bibelbesprechungen* (open discussions of a biblical text) will know where his gift lay. He was trilingual, speaking German, Russian, and English.⁵

A closer study of the *Reiseprediger* system in Manitoba presents another side that must be told. Once the Manitoba Mennonite Brethren Conference became organized in 1929, home missions consisted solely of the appointment of brethren to itinerate among the expanding and distant congregations, especially since many were served by untutored lay preachers. By 1935-36, it was evident that some brethren were in demand and others were not. Such invidious comparisons caused some negative feelings. At Arnaud, in September 1935, the recording secretary wrote of "the pain that is caused by this selection process." Only as the graduates from the WBS returned to their distant smaller congregations can one assume that the problem was reduced. Nevertheless, the *Reiseprediger* system, which lasted until the pastoral system came into vogue, served usefully and inexpensively to bring understanding, knowledge and unity to the innermost circle, the local congregation.⁶

What Is Home Missions?

This period showed up considerable ambivalence, even conflict, concerning the definition and control of mission between the provincial IMKs and the societal, voluntarist movement, which could not be contained. British Columbia was a good case in point. The real problem lay in the early arrangement whereby the IMK felt it was responsible for *all*

innermost concerns, such as itineration, Bible conferences, Sunday school, and workshops for choirs and directors. Gradually, however, a distinction was drawn between the various IMK concerns. The blanket term, *Innere Mission*, was narrowed to become the *innerste Mission* (the innermost mission), the concern for the spiritual life of the self-supporting and potential outreach-supporting congregations, that is, the Mennonite Brethren stronghold. The more general term, home mission, began clearly to connote outreach such as John I. Wiebe's *Randmission* in the Fraser Valley. This earliest distinct reference to a responsibility for going after the scattered Mennonites and German-speaking people (*die Zerstreuten*) appeared in 1938. It also included such activities as Klaas Enns's voluntary efforts among unchurched children and communities in areas distant from Yarrow and South Abbotsford. It was, however, this challenge posed by Enns and his group that seemed to pose a threat to the IMK. C. C. Peters of Yarrow, the leading church at that time, seemed most concerned to place all work, including the nurture of the Vancouver group, under the over-arching authority of one committee.⁷

As has been suggested, two discernible groups were at work. On the one side were those of South Abbotsford, where the Hepburn influence and that of the Bethany Prayer Band was strongest. It was no accident that in 1939 G. W. Peters came from Bethany to deputize, bringing with him a Hepburn quartet. Inspired by such visits from the area where the Western Children's Mission (WCM) was born, the leaders Peter F. Ewert and A. J. Stobbe took heart. Behind them in support stood the somewhat enigmatic but relatively wealthy dairy farmer from Murrayville (now Langley), Klaas Enns. The founder of Coaldale's Mennonite community, as he is considered by some, Enns was wealthier than most when he moved to British Columbia in 1938. He was very persistent, never letting go of a project whether it was an economic one at Coaldale or Murrayville, or whether it was the WCM of British Columbia. This group began to reach to the unchurched non-Mennonite areas of Landor and Lulu and Nicomen Islands. Enns gave his car for scouting purposes, and usually also led in the questioning about the use of the school.

On the other side were the Yarrowers, among whom the Winkler influence was strong, and who tended to have a majority voice in the IMK. Quite independent of Bethany, their sons—among them Henry Brucks, F. C. Peters, Abe Esau, John and Henry Enns—organized the Yarrow Prayer Band. They began to reach out in street meetings, Sunday afternoon schools, and evening evangelistic services. Their direction was far removed from Lulu Island; they went to Chilliwack, Haney, Pitt Meadows, and Mission, looking up mainly German-speaking people.

What the two groups had in common was their voluntarism, which, for a brief time, gave them free scope to reach out into areas where the more timid and conservative representatives of the official church might not go. It also put pressure on the Bible schools to provide training for service of this kind. The Yarrowers especially, as *Russlaender*, felt thankful to be freed from Tsarist and Soviet restrictions. They went out using both the German and Russian languages. Both sides were supported by praying parents. All told, both inadvertently laid bases for the future West Coast Children's Mission, though South Abbotsford in many

ways became more of a mother church than Yarrow. But both groups gave impetus, through prayer bands, for mission.⁸

For a short time some unfortunate vexation existed between the two groups. The records show that Klaas Enns reported for the first time on the fledgling work of the South Abbotsforders, which was called the Western Children's Mission of British Columbia, on September 26, 1941. He stated that as they were still having difficulty getting British Columbian personnel for their *Zeltmission* (tent mission), they had been appealing to Hepburn for assistance. On that occasion Enns was told rather unceremoniously that "as their work was undertaken without consent of the IMK, they were not within biblical guidelines, therefore no support would be forthcoming." Spokesmen for the two sides today are still reticent to name names. One brother still thinks of K. Enns's experience as an "interrogation." Actually the interrogating person was instructed to take steps to become reconciled with Enns.



WCCM Leader, George Sukkau 1950s.
Sukkau brought the two sides together in the early 1940s.

Fortunately, when the Winkler-trained George H. Sukkau of Yarrow took over the leadership of the IMK as well as of the WCM of British Columbia, in which he had been engaged since 1940, a good working relationship could be established. In January 1942 he was elected to the IMK as the representative for *Randmission*. While in the latter capacity he sought fields for the Esaus and Sylvester Dirks around Strawberry Hill, and north of the Fraser River (at least until they were mobilized). Sukkau was able to mend fences between the zealous dairy farmer Klaas Enns and the hitherto jealous IMK. This earlier tension found its resolution in August 1944 when the tent purchased by Enns was paid for by Sukkau's committee. Between March and May, 1945, he facilitated the incorporation of the Mission as the WCCM. In every province, nevertheless, as well as at the NDC level, the IMK continued to function in some form as an "oversight committee" because it felt responsible for unity of doctrine, preservation of the young, and the genuine conversion of souls.⁹

Can Mission and Church Be One?

This absorbing and controversial question arose in the city mission at the NDC level. Some problems arose in Vancouver and Saskatoon when these became focal points for mission in the depression decade, as indicated. Mennonite Brethren came to Saskatoon as early as 1927, and a church was organized in 1932. A year later at an NDC session, B. B. Janz of Coaldale suggested that Saskatoon should receive assistance from the Conference. The problem of integration

of church and mission came in its most acute form, however, in the supervision of the North End, a church organized in Winnipeg in 1909, which was then used as a base for a mission. Manitoba's committee for the North End chapel had become used to receiving money from the NDC long before the migration of the *Russlaender*. That meant that Saskatchewan brethren, who made up the majority of the NDC, had been supporting Winnipeg. NSDC brethren balked at this as early as 1921, and monies needed for new construction in Winnipeg were not forthcoming. That indicates that certain negative attitudes toward Winnipeg had already built up. Besides, Saskatchewan had growing obligations to the *BK's* foreign mission. When the Rempels moved to Saskatoon in 1935, the NSDC had a mission on its own doorstep to think about.

The real question was this: were NDC monies going toward the support of the North End Mennonite Brethren Church, now made up of a majority of *Russlaender*, or to the mission? That brought up the far more fundamental question, the one that received a negative answer for several more decades: can mission and church be one, and under the same roof?¹⁰



City Missionary & Reiseprediger C. N. Hiebert & 4 youngest children. c. 1940.
Seated: Tina, Clarence, C. N.
Standing: Ruth, Martha, Naomi.

This question came to a head during C. N. Hiebert's tenure. He had distinct views on the subject, arguing that mission and church could and should be under the same roof. He tried to persuade the North End Church, of which he was leader, to be an outreaching church in practice. Many resisted this within the North End but supported the continuation of the existing relationship with the NDC. As usual, the financial factor played a dominant role. When Hiebert first came to the North End, a basement structure was already inadequate. It was clearly understood that he would travel extensively to collect money, mainly in

American Mennonite Brethren districts, for the construction of a new building on College Avenue to be completed in 1930.

Thus it was that when Saskatoon's mission chapel was being built about 1936, the NSDC prepared a brief that requested each province involved to take full responsibility for city mission work. It also indicated that the Rosthern circle, at least, preferred to keep monies raised at Harvest Festivals for the work in Saskatoon. Only if the crops were very good would some monies be forthcoming for Winnipeg. They also wanted an "oversight committee" at the NDC level for all city mission work.

This brief caused some consternation — and brought the Manitoba brethren to the June conference in Winkler, prepared to defend their position and to explain that Winnipeg's situation was somewhat unique. F. F. Isaak, a North End member on the city mission committee, explained that in Winnipeg the church had not come to the mission but the mission had come to the church! Moreover, the church had always borne its expenses and had contributed to the mission. In fact, without the North End church, he argued, there would be no mission in Winnipeg. He wanted this working relationship to continue but expressed some willingness to make adjustments. For one thing, Hiebert would no longer be both moderator and missionary, and he would obviously have to itinerate in order to supplement his income.

All this was to no avail. Saskatoon had its way, and two years later a motion from the "oversight committee" to the NDC making each province responsible for its own projects was approved. For some time the North End continued to provide facilities for the mission, but it was really over this issue that Hiebert resigned in 1941 in favor of William Falk who had been helping in the mission since the Rempels went to Saskatoon. Hiebert did not leave, however, without suggesting three alternatives in 1940, which are important for missiological development:

- 1) Use the church as a mission and those who do not want to be connected with it can go to the South End or to North Kildonan; 2) dissociate mission and church and rent a hall for the former, in which case Falk would have to take over; or 3) make the city mission a private faith venture.¹¹

The same question—can mission and church be one? — was raised in another form in Saskatoon. Here it was a struggle for power between the *Kreisleitung* (the equivalent of the IMK) and the city church. A special committee consisting of three NSDC brethren and two from the church, in addition to the two men most interested in the question, H. S. Rempel and Peter Funk, met on May 10, 1938. Funk, a younger man and a minister-elect, was serving as leader when Rempel was appointed missionary. Now, according to the brief prepared by this committee, Rempel (already fifty-six years old) would be both missionary and moderator of the church, as well as leading preacher and *Seelsorger* (pastor). As it turned out for Funk, he was not ordained until 1944 and only became moderator in 1945. Even though church (1932) and mission (1935-36) were physically separated in Saskatoon, the church came to resent the *Kreisleitung* and the mission. Though the affair remains unclear, it seems to have come to a head in the war years. About the time Rempel stepped down from his multiple role in the church, he also lamented the downturn of interest in city mission

work at the NDC level. Though the Rempels remained in Saskatoon until 1969, another work was launched in South West Saskatoon in 1950.¹²

In Vancouver, mission and church (the future first Mennonite Brethren Church on 43rd Avenue was organized in 1932) were treated as one for many years. Failing in 1934-35 to entice H. S. Rempel to come as city missionary, they found Frank Janzen. He was sent "to serve our youth and our families resident in Vancouver," then a modest-sized city. There were about sixty girls in hostels there, doing house work. Though Janzen's ministry was somewhat discredited because of a premature excommunication



Vancouver City Mission (date uncertain).
Jacob G. and Mrs. Thiessen, early missionary (1938 -) and organizer of a Russian group.

unauthorized by the IMK, the work grew. In 1938 J. G. Thiessen from Dalmeny was appointed as missionary. Other brethren served as moderators of the church. Once the earlier problem had been resolved, Vancouver's attitude was that a strong church was foundational to a mission.

As Thiessen concentrated more and more on a Russian group, at a different location from about 1940, the brethren began to look for another worker. Though they knew of his interest as early as 1946, they did not appoint Henry G. Classen as full-time city missionary until 1950. He stayed for twenty-seven years.¹³

The Mary-Martha Homes

Amidst these controversies there was general agreement that all had a primary responsibility for the girls of *Russlaender* families. This was a fundamental interest of the



Mary Martha Home, Winnipeg, 1927.

Many have been identified: First row: Nalja Isaac, d. of F. F. I., Susan Krentz, Olga Perk, Lena DeFehr, Krentz, _____, Neufeld. Second: Frieda Unruh, Esther Hiebert (Horch), Olga Neufeld, Aganetha Kroeker, Anna Thiessen, Frieda Unruh, _____, Anna Neufeld (Renmoek).

Third: Mary Klassen, _____, Lisa Unruh, _____, _____, Agatha Isaak, the next five unknown, Hilda (later Mrs. Bill Neufeld). Fourth: _____, Agatha Klassen, _____, Wiebe (mother of Peter Peters), the next four are unknown, Mariechen Penner, _____. Fifth: _____, Doerksen, the next four unknown, Agnes Unruh, _____, Mary Neufeld, the last two unknown.

innermost mission because it concerned Mennonite Brethren families in a way that was different from city mission. For example, when families moved from Winnipeg, many of the girls simply stayed in the city. There was an immediate urgency for all family members to earn money to pay the *Reiseschuld*, the indebtedness incurred to the Canadian Pacific Railroad for bringing the immigrants by sea and rail from Russia via England. During the depression years, these girls were much sought after as cheap labor. Some, who lived in, were paid from eight to fifteen dollars a month, or, if they lived in their own homes, as low as one dollar a day. As a result, the Mary-Martha Home, Winnipeg was founded by Anna Thiessen.¹⁴

Anna Thiessen never expected to find herself developing a home for working girls. In 1925, she began to help out with temporary shelter; then she provided a continuing hostel for the girls; then the Mary-Martha home became an employment bureau; and finally, with the help of various resource persons, it became a place where spiritual nurture was given. The

building on 437 Mountain Avenue was acquired for rent in September 1931. A. B. Peters developed Bible studies for the residents and for others who came for evenings or on their days off.

Anna Thiessen kept the conference interest very much alive by some remarkable statements she delivered at various times. In fact, aside from foreign missionaries, she must have been the only woman to speak at conferences before 1945. She lectured the NDC delegates in 1937 regarding those parents who allowed their daughters to work in the city before they were prepared to withstand the temptations of city life. She also gave some valuable statistics that year. In all, ten denominations were represented, whereas at first all had been Mennonite; 219 had been in and out of the Home, 166 were resident maids, 37 were doing day work, 9 were living in the Home. Of the 166, 28 were said to be "unsaved" and became the object of prayer. As a result of her long ministry and the environment created there, many Christian girls became highly respected by the middle and upper class



Manitoba.
Mary Martha Home (1931)
437 Mountain Ave., Winnipeg.

women who employed them because of their reliability and faithfulness. Many also became effective witnesses.¹⁵

The same needs had been felt in Saskatoon for some time. Once H. S. Rempel and his family had settled in their home, as Gertrude Huebert wrote,

many friends and strangers sought advice or spiritual help. The working girls were especially in need of help from a motherly person. One day a concerned father said to Mrs. Rempel, "Why don't you have a home for working girls?" These girls were forced to spend their free time in stations, waiting rooms and public lounges. Once they had a church, at first a basement structure, the girls came for Sunday school. Once the home had been established, the attendance grew from "three lonely girls present at the first meeting of the home, to 75-100." On Thursday afternoon a Bible study and a cup of coffee were a special treat for all.¹⁶

Incorporation

Such controversies in the city mission brought up the question of what to do with the convert who did not quite fit ethnically — who was of a different culture. The question had already arisen with respect to the Russian brethren in Saskatchewan. The reader will recall that two Russian congregations separated from the German Mennonite Brethren in 1908. During the 1940s they seem to have amalgamated into one church at Arelee under the leadership or with the assistance of D. B. Wiens. Though succeeding non-Russian Mennonite Brethren pastors have taken pains to assure today's Arelee church that the separation was not suggested for cultural reasons, there are some grounds for believing that fear of intermarriage on the German Mennonite side helped to prompt it. A direct descendant of one of the first Russian Mennonite Brethren families has played this down. The criticism may have arisen, nevertheless, because H. Fast chose a Saskatchewan Russian as his second wife. And there were others who intermarried. The most overt

fear of intermarriage probably surfaced around 1950 as the Arelee church rapidly assimilated to Canadian life, as did all Mennonites.¹⁷

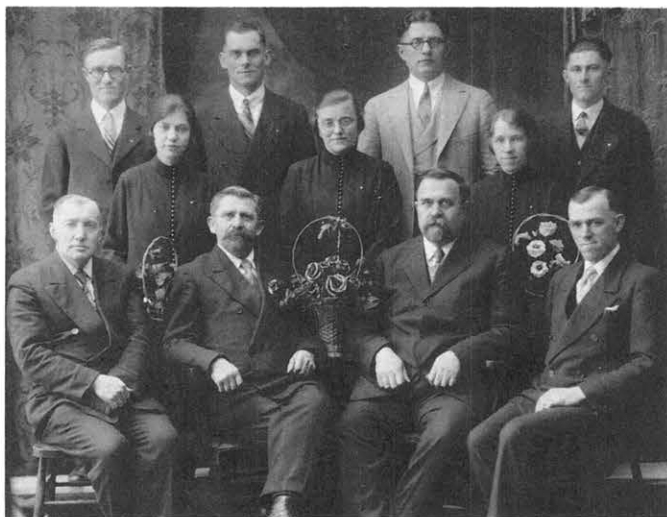
A similar question arose in Winnipeg. This congregation consisted of many families. One of them was the musically-talented family of Edward Horch, who were Lutheran in background and had originated in the mid-nineteenth century in Germany's Wuerttemberg. Others were of German Baptist background. Esther Horch in her book *C. N. Hiebert Was My Father*, covered all of these with the term "non-ethnic Mennonite," while J. A. Toews thought the tension between them and the *Russlaender* came from the *Kanadier-Russlaender* tandem. These explanations are hardly adequate. How quickly the *Russlaender* Mennonite Brethren who were now in the majority in Winnipeg had forgotten that the revival out of which they had been born in 1860 was induced by Pastor Wuest, a *Lutheran* pietist. In Winnipeg the problem was particularly acute because, as stated earlier, the mission had come to the North End church. They were the subject, not the object, of mission in 1913. Yet when the *Russlaender* came, these twenty-five families who were there before them and had been rebaptized by immersion were made to feel like a "Lighthouse Mission."

This problem was duplicated in part in Lindal, Manitoba. A revival in this farming community, fourteen miles southwest of Morden, brought on by Canadian Sunday School Mission (CSSM) workers (among them David Forsyth, Peter J. Esau, and George W. Pries) also confronted Mennonite Brethren leadership with the challenge of incorporation. H. S. Voth, moderator of both the NDC and the Winkler church, baptized more than thirty believers at that time, and baptized another fifteen in 1936. There is no indication that he had any cultural hesitation in baptizing Czech, Russian, Polish, and German converts into one church. Later, however, as one college-trained home missionary after another reported about them as an object of mission or wished to apply Mennonite Brethren church polity and discipline, the converts wished to have a different identity!¹⁸

According to the New Testament and current Mennonite Brethren guidelines for the incorporation of a convert, none of this should have mattered. While of course these things do matter, sociologically speaking, it seems that H. S. Voth had no qualms about such questions in 1929 when he boldly declared what the guidelines would be. It was not a mere coincidence that he presented them just when many new *Russlaender* congregations in the various provinces were being organized preparatory to joining the NDC. While he allowed that bona fide Mennonite Brethren members could transfer from one congregation to another by certificate, he insisted that all new members be charged with those parts of the Mennonite Brethren Confession of Faith (1902) that differed from other confessions. In any case, no one whether from Lindal or Russia was to be accepted for baptism or as a member by transfer unless he or she was prepared to affirm new life in Christ publicly. That was cardinal.¹⁹

The Mission to Children

Just as important as these early controversies were for the future, so also were the first efforts to reach out to children (*die Kindermission*), in the depression decade. The



The Winkler Bible School, Class of 1930.

Teachers, front row: Gerhard Reimer, Johann G. Wiens, Abram H. Unruh, A. A. Kroeker.

Ladies: Lena Kroeker, Anna Neufeld (Rempel), Nettie Kroeker. Men: George W. Peters, Abram H. Redekopp, ———, Bernard Sawatsky.

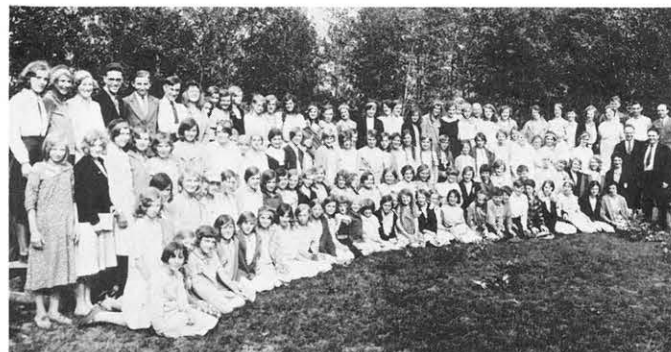
Each of these students made a significant contribution to work among children and to home missions, a truly remarkable group!

results of the latter would force a refocussing of the problem posed by the former.

Very little is known of the Winkler Bible School's effort under the leadership of A. H. Unruh to bring into being a missionary society (*Missionsverein*) during the years of 1928 to 1931. These were the very years that WBS was attended by P. D. Loewen, A. A. Unruh, A. H. Redekopp, Anna Neufeld, the cousins Nettie and Lena Kroeker, G. W. Pries, G. W. Peters, Bernard Sawatsky, and many others who would promote children's work. The Esau brothers, Peter and Abe, and G. H. Sukkau attended a few years later. While the compulsion to organize may have been centrifugal, to prepare eventually for outreach abroad, these students wished to use the society to launch something more immediate. They found it difficult to get something off the ground when one societal meeting after another focused on the philosophical and devotional aspects of mission. Surely the society was not organized to head them off from working with the fledgling CSSM? The latter had in fact successfully recruited the cousins Lena and Nettie Kroeker, who taught with the Mission in 1928. Lena, Nettie, C. N. Hiebert and his daughter Esther attended the very first camp in that year. In any case, in 1931 Unruh gave up the society and seems to have channeled his personal energy into *Die Antwort* ("The Answer"), a monthly journal, and into itineration as a Bible expositor. Nevertheless, two activities developed from the *Verein*. From about 1933, WBS organized Daily Vacation Bible Schools (DVBS) in ever widening circles. Also, WBS students did in fact work under the CSSM in summer camping and DVBS.²⁰

There is little doubt that the founder of the CSSM, Lloyd Hunter, a graduate of Moody Bible Institute, had considerable influence at WBS, where A. A. Kroeker taught from 1929 to 1944. Hunter's convictions about the efficacy of child conversions came under discussion, and methods of garnering in children through summer evangelism and camping were

eventually adopted. Moreover, the early *Randmission* of the Manitoba Conference greatly resembled the outreach methods and policies of the CSSM. The Mission sought to work among the unchurched and unreached at least two miles beyond an evangelical congregation. The CSSM worked where there was widespread poverty, virtually no transportation, and struggling farmers. For example, George Pries had a tent mission at Lindal, and Peter Esau preached there under the CSSM, helping to bring revival to the diverse ethnic community in the Pembina Hills.



The Third Canadian Sunday School Mission Camp, 1931 Gimli, Manitoba.

On the extreme right: standing, Lloyd Hunter, founder, CSSM. Front row, seated, from the right: Mary Loeppke, Lena Kroeker, ———, Nettie Kroeker.

Mennonite young people in Winkler and Hepburn found the CSSM opportunity most appealing, particularly before 1933 when there was no organized Mennonite Brethren-sponsored outreach except in the city of Winnipeg. Not surprisingly, during the 1930s and into the 1940s, about 30 percent of the CSSM personnel and campers bore Mennonite names. Many Mennonite children responded enthusiastically to a promise made in 1928 by CSSM's Muriel Taylor, a graduate of Nyack Bible Institute, New York, that a week at camp could be earned by memorizing five hundred Bible verses. The response to this over the years was overwhelming. Many Mennonite Brethren children were involved, among them Henry Hildebrand, the founder of Briercrest. Many Christian day school teachers listened patiently after school hours as children recited their verses to qualify. Henry Schellenberg of Winkler must have listened to thousands of verses as children recited them individually, all in the interest of verification for such an outing.²¹

Western Children's Mission

At the same time as the WBS was struggling toward a meaningful outreach, a new school was launched by an inter-Mennonite society in Hepburn. From the time of the founding of a Bible school at Herbert, the Rosthern/Hepburn circle also wanted a school. In spite of frequent discussion, Hepburn's dream did not materialize until 1927, when Bethany Bible School (BBS) was established. George Harms, a graduate of BIOLA and Moody, taught in the early months of that year. The only teacher in 1927-28 was Dietrich P. Esau. He was joined a year later by J. A. "Vaeterchen" Toews from Coaldale (a *Russlaender*). In spite of some competition from a Bible school in nearby Dalmeny (1928-54), BBS persisted and became the site of the Bethany

Prayer Band and its offshoot, the Western Children's Mission (WCM).

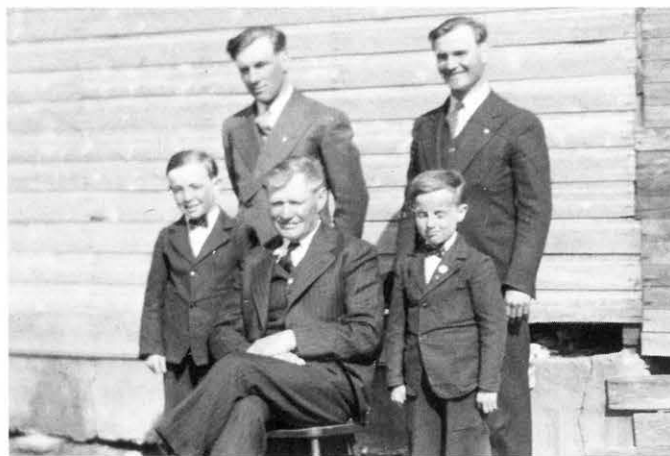
Those who brought renewal and a vision for service to Bethany in 1932 were J. B. Toews and G. W. Peters. Toews, the son of "Vaeterchen" Toews, had been studying at Western Theological Seminary, Portland, Oregon. Peters first attended at Herbert and then at Winkler, graduating in 1930. Following extensive evangelism in Saskatchewan he also went to Prairie Bible Institute, Three Hills, Alberta (PBI) for one semester, to witness PBI's emphasis for himself. There he met J. H. Epp, a Krimmer Mennonite Brethren who had gone to PBI because of his interest in China. Epp had been hearing from his brother at BBS that new life had come to Bethany when Toews, Peters, and committed students formed the Prayer Band. A written application to the Band for membership would have been (and was) rejected if it did not contain a convincing expression of vital Christian experience, as well as a commitment to renewal in the school and to service. The Band's first concern was to the unconverted students who had been sent by parents for Bible instruction.



The World-Famous Prairie Bible Institute, 1946-7.
Many persons mentioned in these pages attended here from the thirties to the seventies, including the author (1945-7).

This serious tone at Bethany drew J. H. Epp away from PBI to study at Bethany, and also enlisted the enthusiasm of Frank F. Froese who also had attended PBI. These four brethren, Epp, Froese, Peters, and Toews, were most prominently instrumental in bringing to birth the Western Children's Mission. Peters was the spark plug who first scouted the countryside on a bicycle looking for mission fields. The Prayer Band was fueled for years by spring commitments to summer assignments in DVBS and by the glowing reports of their work in the fall. They went out two by two living on four or five dollars a month. In 1934, sixteen students went out under the CSSM. In the next year the two Bible schools sent out forty-four students into thirty-eight fields. In 1936, they reported a conversion rate of 10 percent in thirty school districts, on a total budget of \$440.72.²²

Among those students was H. M. Willems who recalled that they were given five dollars and a ride to the field in a Model A Ford. The girls would be picked up for the return home, but the boys had to fend for themselves between fields or on the way home. Each had to pledge to earn five or ten dollars more, and to prepare his or her own DVBS



Hepburn, Sask. (1940s).
Henry H. Willems and his four sons: Nick and Henry M. at the back, and Jake and Frank at the front.

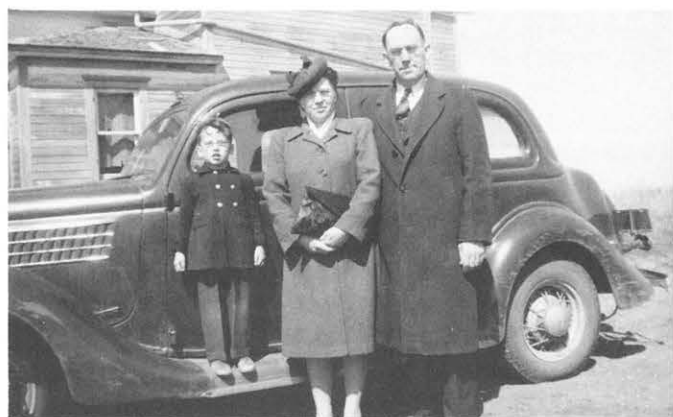
materials. Existence on site was often crude in the extreme. Lodging consisted of a log cabin with a sod room, a cold floor, and many fleas. Contentment for the stomach often had to be found in stale bread, sardines (Willems likes them to this day!), and a depression variety of yogurt. The field of endeavour was north and northwest—from Hague (just east of Hepburn) in a grand sweep to Pierceland, through Meadow Lake—always north of the Yellowhead route and the North Saskatchewan River.²³



Hague Ferry, Saskatchewan WCM, 1940s.
All those people were inside the building!

Given the initial success and enthusiastic response, despite many hardships and even harassments, a decision was reached in 1937 to incorporate the WCM. Once the charter was duly signed on May 10, Peters became the guiding spirit, at least until 1943. Praise, prayer, exhortation to faith and self-reliance financially, as well as spiritual introspection, a characteristic of the workers, became the hallmarks of the annual meetings. In 1939, Peters was elected president, Epp became field director, and Alvena Kruger (Epp's future wife) was field secretary. There was no promise of salary, only that whatever monies came in would be divided equally. A year later the field was enlarged. Branch prayer bands were put in place, four brethren were placed in the field, and a Bible memory contest started (CSSM-style). Ben Kroeker was the field director.²⁴

In the south, J. J. Thiessen became the man to watch. He hailed from Kelstern and studied at Herbert for three years, and then at Hepburn, Winkler, and PBI for one year each. He spent the year at PBI to improve his English. It was there in the south that he would meet Helen Goerzen, of Sommerfeld background. Goerzen, a student at Herbert, was one of those who remembered hearing the young Peters preach in Swift Current in 1932 when about thirty persons were converted. She and other students from Herbert had gone out, beginning in 1935, to teach children at Greenfarm, Kelstern, and Herbert. She remembers a good missionary spirit and more of an independence of CSSM than in the north. Their enthusiasm challenged the more conservative brethren of South Saskatchewan who wanted everything done through the IMK, as it was in British Columbia.



Greenfarm, Sask. (1945).
Helen and J.J. Thiessen, and son Samuel James. They directed the WCM in South Saskatchewan.

One of the romantic stories to come out of home missions is that of J. J. Thiessen courting Helen Goerzen by teaching her to drive his car. As some will recall, his eyesight was restricted to "guiding vision." She became wife and chauffeur, to do for South Saskatchewan and the WCM what Peters had done in the north, looking for schools, teachers, and supporting homes. In addition to heading up the WCM in the south, Thiessen taught at Herbert for twelve years (1945-56), served the Lucky Lake church for five years, Kelstern for six, and Greenfarm for nineteen, often part-time. In 1972, he and Frank Froese were rewarded for their years of service with one hundred dollars for every year they had worked "gratis," as Helen Thiessen called it.²⁵

Whether or not support from the Conference was anticipated is not clear. When Peters appeared before the North Saskatchewan brethren for the first time in May 1940, he stressed the international and interdenominational character of the WCM. Eighteen months later he stated,

The purpose of the *Kindermision* is to win youth for the Lord and through youth to serve our land. The Children's Mission shall remain missionary; the mission should not have church-building as its main principle, but to bring the gospel to those who don't have it. When conversions take place, the task of the mission is done; there the church must step in. When we have reason to believe this step has been reached, we will notify the conference so that further steps can be planned.²⁶

Peters seems to have adopted a nineteenth century missiological concept that mission must not have church as its first aim lest mission activity stops when the missionary turns pastor. Churches should be served not by missionaries but by local converts who are trained for the task. This principle was enunciated by Henry Venn, secretary of the Church Missionary Society, in three papers written between 1851 and 1866 and was labeled the "euthanasia" principle. When mission becomes church, the life supports are withdrawn and the church stands on its own without the missionary or the body sustaining him. Though it was never free from misunderstanding and complications in its application, this principle forms a landmark in missionary history even though it applied to the foreign field in the first instance. Translating this into Canadian and Mennonite terms, Peters hoped that the NSDC would place confidence in the WCM that the problems of this intermediate stage for converts, between outreach and church, would be met in due course. In fact, as converts were made and the workers themselves expressed concern for the spiritual nurture of their charges, the matter of incorporation into the church brought up the relationship of the Mission to both the NSDC and the SSDC. This will be developed in the next section.²⁷

The Bible Schools

The Bible schools played a profoundly significant role in the NDC. The brotherhood and its innermost mission were immensely strengthened. A most striking example of this is seen in the fact that of home mission workers dealt with in this book 94 percent attended Bible school of which 72 percent were Mennonite Brethren schools. These students set the pace for outreach, as we have seen with respect to Winkler and Hepburn. J. B. Toews wrote of the Bible schools as follows: "The emphasis on personal . . . conversion . . . and responsibility for a lost world generated the kind of spiritual concern within the brotherhood that could not be contained within the slow-moving, corporate functions of a conference."²⁸

Besides the schools at Winkler and Hepburn, the school at Herbert deserves special note, particularly during the time when it was under the principalship of William Bestvater. Bestvater came to Herbert with his family in 1921. He had already been teaching Bible classes in the North End Church in Winnipeg, with some students from Saskatoon attending. This factor and his reputation of many years as a conference speaker induced Herbert brethren to send for Bestvater to head up the school. In the fall of 1921, he began with forty-one students. Because the classes were conducted mainly in German, he had to write some of his own texts, for example on doctrine (*Glaubenslehre*). He offered a full range of courses, including his lectures on the dispensational view of God's plan for the world. One of his associates was H. N. Wiebe who instructed in music and led a small orchestra, something Bestvater had already encouraged at the North End with the Horch family present.

Bestvater placed the school on a sounder financial basis by helping to organize a new association. He did deputation work widely, taking with him a male quartet made up of G. W. Peters, Bernard Sawatsky, Daniel Berg, and himself. Soon after he left and the depression came, the school fell under what Margaret Epp called the Triple D: Depression,

Drought, and the Destroyer — the grasshopper. Fortunately, the brethren J. F. Redekop and Henry Regehr could reopen the school in 1932. In 1958, the Herbert school merged with Bethany. During its tenure it had enrolled about thirteen hundred students who brought blessings to many people.²⁹



Hepburn, BBS c. 1955.
Front: Walter Wiebe, Paul Wiebe, J. H. Epp, P. R. Toews, G. Dyck.
Standing: Teachers left — J. K. Schroeder, right — Rita Mueller.

Astonishingly, between 1925 and 1947 another nineteen schools were established to reach young people.* Excluding the three that have continued to this day at Winkler, Hepburn, and Clearbrook, the average life of the Bible schools was fourteen years. It is plainly evident that the founding of Prairie Bible Institute in 1922 by Leslie E. Maxwell cast an emulative spell over many others in their thinking about Bible schools. Mennonite Brethren youth were fascinated by this school, which specialized in missionary training, as did Nyack in New York. But it was not simply the desire to emulate a popular school that motivated the

* Town or Congregation	Year Founded	Early Teachers
Winkler, Manitoba	1925	A. H. Unruh, J. G. Wiens, G. Reimer
Hepburn, Sask.	1927	D. P. Esau, J. A. Toews, J. B. Toews, G. W. Peters
Dalmeny, Saskatchewan	1928	A. B. Peters
Winnipeg, Manitoba	1929	
Coaldale, Alberta	1929	
Yarrow, British Columbia	1930	
Steinbach, Manitoba	1932	J. W. Reimer
Gem, Alberta	1932	Henry Unger
La Glace, Alberta	1933	
Aberdeen, Saskatchewan	1934	
Crowfoot, Alberta	1936	
Vauxhall, Alberta	1937	
Speedwell, Saskatchewan	1937	
Greendale, British Columbia	1938	
Vineland/Virgil/Kitchener, Ontario	1938-1966	B. B. Boldt, Herman Voth, Abram Block, I. Ewert
Arelee, Saskatchewan	1943	D. B. Wiens, Louis Goertz
South Abbotsford/British Columbia, Clearbrook, (CBI)	1945	
East Chilliwack, British Columbia	1947-59	Gerhard Thielmann



WBS 1956 class.
Front: Dave Penner, teachers John Boldt, B. B. Boldt, H.H. Redekopp, G. D. Huebert, John Gossen, Grad. Jake Pauls.
Standing: Jake Hildebrandt, Jake Penner, W. Peters, Grace Friesen, Jake Redekopp, Elizabeth Unger, Henry Arendt, Abe Goertzen, Peter Klassen.

brethren to provide Bible training close to home. The NDC declared in 1934 that the Bible school was “among the most important branches of our innermost mission.” Spiritual direction in a time of great economic adversity and cultural change seemed paramount. Through the Bible schools, Mennonite Brethren identity was preserved and consolidated. In fact, by 1935 two Bible teachers’ conferences had considered coordination with Tabor College in Hillsboro, Kansas.³⁰

Given this phenomenon, one question often debated was this: what were the Bible schools for, or put another way, did they train for mission? Obviously, they could not duplicate PBI’s program or that of the interdenominational Winnipeg Bible Institute (the forerunner of today’s Winnipeg Bible College, Otterburne). We have already seen how Winkler and Hepburn differed from one another around 1928 to 1932. That difference had given credibility to the common wisdom that Winkler produced preachers while Hepburn produced missionaries. While that may be an oversimplification, we have witnessed the difference between the Yarrowers from Winkler and the South Abbotsforders from Hepburn. Peter Esau, who graduated from Winkler in 1932, stated that he would not have known much about mission except for his subsequent studies taken at the Winnipeg Bible Institute. Winkler was concerned about staffing Sunday schools, preparing youth leaders, and consolidation, while Winnipeg was sending youth into mission, especially in conjunction with the young CSSM. Henry Regehr, who taught at Herbert from 1928 to 1942 opined that Herbert trained for life, instilled a high morality, and aimed at profound Bible knowledge. Mission and outreach were secondary, though not neglected, as must be obvious from the success of the Western Children’s Mission in finding workers.

Until there is thorough research into what was taught and who the teachers were in each school, we can only assume that most teachers were from Winkler. Hence, Dalmeny, Gem, Coaldale, Yarrow will have tended to follow Winkler’s emphases. Peter Ewert, a Hepburn graduate, and one of the founders of the WCM of British Columbia, recalled his experience of trying to nudge a Bible school effort at South Abbotsford in the direction of outreach. One, whose name he still would not mention told him quite categorically, “No, we should not do that! We must teach our young people to be good members of the church.” All that seemed important



Peter F. Ewert, Clearbrook 1982.

Ewert was a founding member of the WCM, Hepburn, and of the WCCM, South Abbotsford, 1937 and 1939.

to that South Abbotsford was to have a "small remnant" who would be good members who were, of course, German speaking.³¹

Admittedly, this may not be the most important question concerning the Bible schools. The fact is, many hundreds served each year in some form of outreach, though there were increasing complaints in the post-war period that workers were hard to find. One must acknowledge that without the strengths of those graduates within the inner circle of the congregations, always the first concern of the majority, there would be no mission, home or foreign. Besides, there were some real fears in the inter-war period. Theological fissiparation and disunity was one such fear. The ideology of communism and the doctrine of evolution were additional fears. Since Canadian Mennonite Brethren still had no "higher school" of learning, it was clear that someone or some institution must lead or coordinate, and Tabor attempted to play that role for the Canadian Bible schools until the mid 1940s. There was talk of giving leadership, coordinating curricula, transferring credits.

But Tabor seemed to have a rival from a surprising quarter. Some saw the support of Tabor College as a threat to Rosthern Academy's position. They became very protective of Rosthern. In 1941, several brethren were challenged to justify (or explain) their criticism of the Rosthern Academy and confessed to having made "unprovoked statements" against it. Obviously, some Bible school teachers wanted to remain close to Rosthern and Gretna, both of which produced good teachers.³²

Just as the day of the MBBC was dawning, C. C. Peters gave a telling oration at the NDC about the significant impact made by the Bible schools. Speaking for nine schools, he stated in 1944 that they had adequately met the needs of the Canadian churches. He found it gratifying that there were thirty teachers, five hundred students, and about a thousand young people working as teachers in the Sunday schools, DVBS, and youth work. He lamented, however, that of the five hundred students, only about one-half would be graduating. He wondered why young people were not better prepared for such studies. Were the theological standards too high? Many courses seemed too demanding for the average student. He lamented that so many were attending

English speaking schools such as PBI. In that way finances were being drawn off. Much more money was needed at home because the Bible school salaries were far too low.

Unfortunately, there is no way of knowing how many attended Prairie Bible Institute or Briercrest Bible College. While PBI has never kept track of denominational affiliation (dozens of well-known Mennonite Brethren could be named!), Henry Hildebrand of Briercrest has estimated that about 30 percent of his students have been Mennonite.³³

On the Threshold of Mission?

All of these discussions about mission and the supreme exemplar of voluntary outreach, the WCM, brought the Mennonite Brethren of Canada to the threshold of a great movement of going beyond the congregations with the gospel. It might have come sooner except for some severe restrictions. One was the financial factor, given the severe depression that hit everyone hard, especially those who had only recently come from Russia. Aside from that, a bald statement in the minutes of 1930 gave away a fundamental attitude that had remained characteristic: "*Wir haben uns immer nach der Kasse gerichtet*;" ("We have always governed ourselves according to what is in the treasury.")

Perhaps one can easily read too much into this statement. But it does surely mean that outreach beyond the innermost mission was always limited to surpluses. On the prairies, in a one-staple economy, everything depends on climate and market forces, and economic well-being naturally has priority.

Even then, however, some of the voluntarists at Winkler Bible School and in the WCM and its offshoots seemed to launch out on a shoestring and a crust of bread. In large measure they adopted the "faith mission" concept promulgated in the 1860s by J. Hudson Taylor of the China Inland Mission. This was widely used as the way to form interdenominational and societal agencies for mission abroad. G. W. Peters seems to have had this model in mind in 1937.

The more general attitude that many young people straining at the reins in those years found in the congregations was an unwillingness to support anything beyond the inner stronghold, though parents might send their children to Bible school as a way to pass the winter months profitably.³⁴

Another restrictive factor to outreach beyond home congregations was cultural isolation because of the German language and customs. Mennonites were not ready to assimilate converts—not even in the cities—let alone in the small towns of Saskatchewan. Hence, they tended to organize missions to children in distant places. This was the mission "at arm's length."

A third factor was the interruption caused by total mobilization in war. This slowed down the spread and adoption of the WCM model because of the draining off of young men into various services. To these war years, which had a profound impact on the Mennonite Brethren, we must now turn.³⁵

III

THE MISSION AT HOME DURING THE WAR YEARS, 1939-1945

The challenge of the larger world at war, once again acutely raised the issue of military exemption. But as the problem had been foreseen since 1934, there was some time to come to grips with more than the mere question of military exemption based on promises made two generations earlier. What was "our confession" in the matter of war and peace to be, B. B. Janz of Coaldale asked. Would the church remain truly and biblically Anabaptist-Mennonite? That was the substance of the recurring *Wehrfrage* on conference agendas.

Another question related to the war and its aftermath was *die Dienstfrage* in aid of Mennonites who were displaced from their European homes by war. In part, this reconsideration of service for peace led brethren to develop a new service model in the Canada Inland Mission at the same time as they conceived of the need for academically respectable theological education. After all, the controversies surrounding the affirmation of non-resistance had far-reaching ramifications. They brought home the need for some radical decisions affecting the Mennonite Brethren stronghold, the innermost mission. Young people were to be better served and prepared for the larger world of war and peace, ideology and propaganda, as well as for the church's chief task, which was conceived as evangelism!

Non-Resistance and Pro-Germanism

Many idealistic young people, including Canadians who fought on the left in the Spanish Civil War (1936-39), thought they should support Stalin's Popular Front against the fascist powers. The Russian Mennonites, by contrast, had experienced "War Communism" and the civil war between the Reds and the Whites (1917-1921), and had decided to leave the Soviet Union in spite of Lenin's New Economic Policy of 1921. They were easily persuaded to see in communism a disruptive, atheistic, Satanic ideology. But they had been divided once before on how best to deal with that system. Should their stance in the Ukraine have been that of self-defence or entire non-resistance?

The irony of it all was that the real aggressor faced by Canada as a nation on September 10, 1939 was much admired by many Mennonites (and pockets of other Canadians also). The reference is, of course, to Hitler's Germany. Many *Russlaender* came to see in Hitler and his ideology the strongest and the most immediate bulwark against ruinous communist socialism. What is more, they found support among Prussian Mennonites for Pro-Germanness that has been described as a Volkish ideology. Not long after the accession of Hitler to power, pro-Nazi sympathizers like Walter Quiring found a voice in *Der Bote*, published in Rosthern. Coincidentally, and emanating also from North Saskatchewan, the Russian Mennonite Brethren from Blaine Lake in 1934 raised the issue of non-resistance to war. Under the sponsorship of the NSDC, they brought forward a resolution condemning all war and war-makers. The seven-point resolution was formulated first in conjunction with evangelical Baptists of Blaine Lake.

After a lengthy discussion in which NDC brethren demurred against or at such antiwar declarations, they nevertheless decided in peacetime to affirm non-resistance. Added to the minutes was a less than oblique reference to the pro-Nazi position, stating that it was inconsistent for brethren to be demanding freedom of conscience on the one hand, and supporting those who advocate violence on the other.²

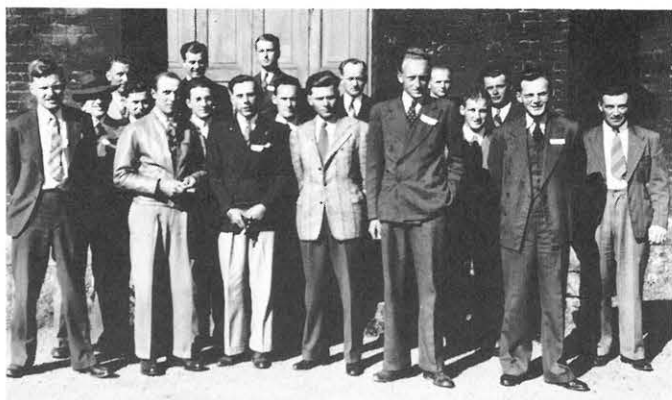


B.B. Janz impressing an issue on Abe Goerz, 1952 (Wpg.)

As a result, from that year until the end of the Korean war, the war question caused much discussion. The Mennonite Brethren became increasingly aware of the fundamental biblical nature of that question, and in part, of the nature of their identity. Were they really Anabaptist? B. B. Janz, the Mennonite statesman, became the vigorous spokesman for a non-resistant position in which one's witness should be dynamic, and not ineffectual, like a policy of complete exemption or withdrawal into forestry work. In 1935, he challenged Conference delegates: "Are we the Mennonites we profess to be?" he asked. He thought our teaching had been neglected; our stronghold had not been impregnated with deep convictions on this subject. Repeatedly he tried to counteract the pro-German articles in *Der Bote* and to infuse a new determination in all groups to stand firm against such opinions.³

Alternative Service

While Mennonites of the West and of Ontario were unfortunately divided on the question of how their men should serve, the majority came to demonstrate loyalty to Canada rather than to the aggressor, and their representatives were able to assure the government that Mennonites were prepared to serve their country, but not in the armed forces. Whereas the Ontario churches, together with the Quakers, formed the Conference of Historic Peace Churches to deal with government in matters of military service, in the West a schism developed along *Kanadier-Russlaender* lines. The former, more conservative, at first resisted any suggestions of alternatives to military service, while Janz wanted to realize a non-combatant medical corps.

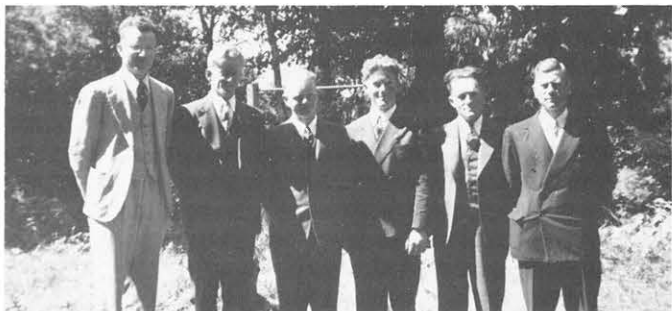


B.C. Forestry Service Camp (c. 1942).

Three M.B. who became prominent are pictured here: J. A. Toews, preacher, back row, left John Boldt, just below Toews, to the left F. C. Peters; back row, right, others well known are Henry Epp, UM minister, back row center Harold Schmidt, middle row, left tallest in the back row are Rufus Jutzi and Clayton Burkholder. These boys met to choose John L. Fretz as editor of *The Beacon*, a CO paper published at Lake Cowichan.

As it was, the Canadian government was persuaded to accept the Mennonite offer of alternative service. But in May 1941 J. G. Gardiner, War Minister, would not go beyond a program of civilian alternative service. As a result 10,870 Canadians selected the status of conscientious objector for alternative service. Mennonites made up 72 percent of those identifiable by denominational affiliation. Most of this number were placed in civilian work camps for a variety of tasks such as fire fighting and tree planting.⁴

From the standpoint of the home churches from which they came, "our boys" in the camps needed the ministry of the Word and the consolation of Christian fellowship. Hence, the provincial Home Missions Committees, as well as the corresponding leadership of other Mennonite groups, arranged for itinerants to visit the camps, almost as in the days before the war. Among Mennonite Brethren who served were C. D. Toews and John I. Wiebe from British Columbia; J. A. Toews from Alberta; and H. H. Janzen and Abram Huebert from Ontario. C. F. Klassen, who ranks in stature with B. B. Janz for his contribution to the *Wehrfrage* and the *Dienstfrage*, tried to stir up Manitoba Mennonite Brethren for active ministry to the men as early as 1941. He had concrete suggestions to make. They should be taught Mennonite history and the peace position, missions and MCC



B.C. Forestry Service Camp (1942)

Two Preachers and a Quartette to serve "our boys" as conscientious objectors in Alternative Service.

Jake H. Epp, Hepburn, Rudy Boschman, Aaron Martens, Peter Janzen, Abe J. Sawatsky, John A. Harder, Yarrow.

history, and the relationship of the Christian to the state and society. All of this would be of great benefit for "our boys."

It is clear from criticisms made later that much of this was not done, at least not to a great extent. One of the young men, J. F. Friesen from Roblin, Manitoba, showed up the inconsistency of many boys in the witness for peace. Did they go to camp only to avoid going to war? Why was it that out of eighty men who had professed before a judge that they believed in non-resistance, only eight came out for service? On the other hand, Henry H. Janzen from Kitchener gave a glowing impression of the positive stance of the men. Many, like John Boldt, thought that this was their first mission field. Boldt organized a male quartet that actively served in conjunction with a Brethren group near Lake Cowichan on Vancouver Island.⁵

Though the war years retarded the home missions



Lake Cowichan, 1944 B.C. Forest Service

John Boldt, Fred Reimer, Seranus Wideman, Peter Penner. COs form quartet for ministry in Cowichan.

thrust, they nevertheless had their positive effects. There was a strong response to the threat to faith. Leading brethren were alarmed at the theological weaknesses revealed by the experience of war. Steps taken before the war to prepare young people in the congregations were minor compared with those taken afterward. B. B. Janz favored firm disciplinary action against those who had enlisted, and when the Korean war came in June of 1950 he reaffirmed this position. Non-resistance was to be taught and church membership made conditional upon acceptance of this position. If anyone enlisted and sought membership afterwards, he would be encouraged to undergo a *Sinnesaenderung* (a change of mind) in the matter.

J. A. Toews reinforced this concern in 1949 when he wrote that non-resistance was the only possible position the church could take because war and the great task of the church—missions—were "diametrically opposed." C. F. Klassen was equally concerned to maintain the position, but considered other mandates for the church just as vital as evangelism. The church, he stated, should manifest an "active non-resistance" that was prepared to sacrifice "in the name of Christ," to help the suffering in wartorn areas and in dire distress anywhere. Because of Klassen's influence during the post-war period, the rehabilitation of Mennonite people, displaced by the war, first in European camps and then by transportation to South America and to Canada, expanded the service for peace. Much of this was channelled through the Mennonite Central Committee, *das Hilfswerk*. Later, at the Conference level, the Mennonite

Brethren dimension of this service was named "General Welfare (*Wohlfahrt*) and Public Relations." It served mainly the people in South America. After the war, service for peace led inexorably to Voluntary Service, as in Newfoundland's MCC Voluntary Service, in the 1950s, and eventually to a Mennonite Brethren counterpart known as Christian Service (1960).⁶

Discipling Our Own

The doctrine of Christian pacifism was of course not the only concern of the brethren. They also saw the need for an overall plan for youth work as part of the reinforcement of the congregations. H. F. Klassen, a brother to C. F. Klassen and a youth work leader in Manitoba, lamented past failures to teach youth adequately in foundational truths, to bring them under the lordship of Christ, and to keep them in the church. One of the decisions made in 1945 at the NDC level arose from this concern. It was to adopt a Manitoba periodical called *Konferenz-Jugendblatt (KJ)* as a Canadawide publication for youth. It served as a unifying influence among young people until it was replaced by the *Mennonite Observer (MO)* in 1956. In the very first issue of the *KJ*, published in May 1944 Klassen wrote,

The last years have brought us bitter experiences. Many of our youth have departed from our faith principles, or they have never known them well enough to find their orientation in them. We of an older immigrant generation were too concerned to secure our material well-being. Meanwhile, we are faced with a problem among us of critical proportions.

... 7

The theological ferment of this period, especially the emphasis of the neglected principle of discipleship and the fracturing aspects of the war brought new developments. Concerned as the Mennonite Brethren were with evangelism as the primary task, they required a training school that would prepare teachers for the many Bible schools, for positions of leadership in the voluntary agencies such as the WCM, and for pastors and teachers of the congregations, not to mention the foreign mission. They were also anxious to have a peacetime Christian witness under a unified umbrella organization. The two new institutions that developed from this search for unity and guidance in 1944 were the Mennonite Brethren Bible College (MBBC) and the Canada Inland Mission (CIM).

Mennonite Brethren Bible College

Actually, the project for a "higher Bible school" was launched without too much apparent advance notice at the NDC of 1944. It nevertheless received good initial support because it promised to meet many crucial needs. A most telling rationale for such a school had been offered in 1939. After articulating the blessings of the Bible school movement to date despite a depressed economy, J. A. "Vaeterchen" Toews of Hepburn stated, "For our circumstances it is absolutely necessary that our Bible teachers receive a thorough general education as well as special theological training." This was all the more crucial because some teachers were returning from colleges and seminaries with ideas that deviated from the accepted Mennonite Brethren way. But it was not until



Winnipeg, Manitoba, MBBC, 77 Kelvin Street, 1952 MBBC and Ebenezer Hall in the bright winter.

four years later at Herbert that the matter was raised again seriously. Some fear was then expressed that many potentially talented young people would be lost unless an academically respectable school was created in a location central to the NDC. Perhaps, at first, it could be attached to one of the existing Bible schools. The crying need, as the war ended, was to train personnel for war-related welfare service, as well as teachers for the Bible schools and preachers for the congregations.⁸

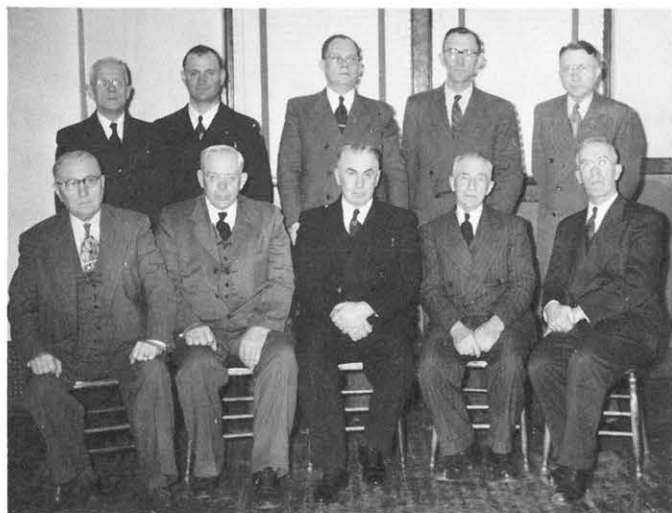
Undoubtedly one of the paramount considerations at the time concerned Tabor College. Whereas in 1935 the very same NDC Bible school committee that was calling for a "higher" school in Canada had considered coordinating their program with that of Tabor, in 1944, one of the prime movers in both the Bible school movement and the new college, Unruh, had to defend Tabor against its many critics. That Tabor/NDC relations had deteriorated may be inferred from a confidential letter Janz wrote to the president of Tabor on January 20, 1945. Janz confessed to be completely scandalized and embarrassed. And P. R. Lange, also from Tabor, wrote to H.S. Voth on February 12, wondering whether Tabor was "at the point of disintegration."

Unruh prepared his Coaldale delegation audience for the defence of Tabor by alluding to the trying times through which Tabor had passed since its founding and adoption by the BK. First there was a fire, and then the terrible depression. He did not think that Tabor now deserved this "unthinking and unfounded" negative criticism. Knowing the criticism was directed mainly against the alleged unbecoming social life there, he stated: "We can't expect that the College can put in place a Christian ethic which is totally different from the more relaxed life-style prevailing in the congregations."⁹

Not only did the future MBBC have implications for Tabor and any other institutes of higher learning that might be planned by American brethren; it also had serious implications for Winkler Bible School, from which its most attractive teacher, Unruh, would presumably be withdrawn. Would WBS, dependent on a society, die? Had it not trained most of the potential leaders of the post-war

decade—J. H. Quiring, F. H. Friesen, G. W. Peters, the Redekopps (H. H., A. H., I. W.), Herman Lenzmann, George Sukkau — to name only a few? Even though WBS was disappointed that the “Fifth Class” could not become nuclear to the first year of the new college, all was not lost for Winkler. The school was taken over by the Manitoba Conference. When MBBC was in fact taken to Winnipeg by conference decision in 1944, it was clear that Manitoba brethren and others had done their homework to ensure a favorable reception for Winnipeg as the site of the new school.¹⁰

Most of the homework seems to have been done at a meeting in Herbert in August 1944. Present were representative brethren from three institutions: the newly-planned Canada Inland Mission (CIM), the new college, and the Bible school teachers of western Canada. The one item on the agenda, of course, was the working relationship between the CIM and the future MBBC. The two projects were intimately tied together and each was fully discussed, though the CIM was treated quite tentatively by comparison and consequently suffered from lack of enthusiasm or clarity in the face of the other. Voth and Unruh were deputed to tour the churches of the provincial Conferences in order to explain the complementary nature and necessity of the two projects. Even the preliminary decision about the purchase of a building at 77 Kelvin Street seems to have been made at Herbert.¹¹



Canadian Conference MBBC Board (early 1950s)
Standing: David Epp, Henry M. Willems, H. H. Janzen, President, J. K. Doerksen, B. B. Fast.
Seated: C.A. DeFehr, _____ Neufeld, Jake Epp, H. P. Toews, Aaron A. Toews.

The declared purpose of MBBC was to prepare Bible school teachers, missionaries, and church workers; to channel theological thinking, and to raise the standard of music by developing a music school. By then there were sixteen Bible schools. Young people like the Esaus, Poetkers, and Bruckses were prepared and anxious to go abroad as missionaries, and the CIM concept promised the opening of many new fields at home. The end of the war was in sight during the first year of MBBC (1944-45), and a new spring and harvest, in a spiritual sense, might be expected on all fronts.

Following that first year as president, Unruh gave his own assessment of the College's significance. He considered that student activity in William Falk's city mission provided a wonderful opportunity to awaken interest in the commitment to mission. Student enthusiasm for mission would infiltrate the congregations and lead them to offer prayerful support for the institute designed to prepare a generation of prophets whose knees had not “bowed unto Baal” (I Kings 19:18). He was hopeful that the fissiparous tendencies between provincial Conferences would fall away as youth from all areas of the new Canadian Conference studied together in Winnipeg. He hoped also that it would inculcate four virtues or strengths: knowledge of God's Word; love for the Mennonite Brethren church; the ability to work in faith in that church; and the discernment to see how the work could be strengthened and expanded.¹²

The Bible College project had a profound impact on the Ontario Conference. Formed in 1932, it did not join the *BK* until 1939, and the NDC until 1945. As the Ontario conference committee explained, just as the NDC joined the Ontario Conference for the purpose of supporting and making use of Bethesda Home at Vineland/Campden as a home for mentally handicapped, so Ontario now wished to join the NDC in order to benefit from MBBC.¹³

Although a history of home missions cannot give a full history of the College, it may be said that it seemed to attain its primary objectives. As Leslie Stobbe pointed out in 1954, of 146 graduates in ten years, 24 were missionaries in foreign lands, seven were in home mission fields, 21 were teaching in Bible schools; while the remainder were serving at home, bringing more unity into the Conference and giving direction to the congregations. Another brother put it more crudely at about the same time. Reporting on the College as a board member he stated that 5 percent of the graduates were “bad eggs,” had negative attitudes, but the other 95 percent were serving in all branches of the Conference.¹⁴

The Case for Music

One of the most unusual departments of the new institution of learning was that of music. When J. B. Toews first explained it to the people of Ontario, he stated that the College would offer a three-year course in Bible and Music, where those aspiring to teach music in the Bible schools, high schools, public schools; and to be choir directors in the congregations; could obtain a complete training at a conservatory standard. The man placed at the head of the music school was Ben Horch.

From the very beginning, music had the support of the first president, Abraham Unruh. He had brought with him from Russia “*ein Sinn fuer Musikbildung*” (an appreciation for music training). This appreciation came from the development of the first Mennonite Brethren choirs following the origins of the church in 1860. But this support for music was brought to Winnipeg long before it was brought to Winkler. Bestvater, the first city missionary, encouraged the first course for choir leaders, led by Aaron Sawatsky.

Bestvater's successor, Erdman H. Nikkel, was himself an amateur violinist. He initiated the idea of having a church orchestra for the Sunday evening service, and led the first one himself as he played. This seems to have been the beginning



Erdman Nikkel, Wpg. City Missionary 1921-25.

of the Mennonite orchestra in the life of the Winnipeg community. When Nikkel came in 1921, Ben Horsch was fourteen years old. His father, Edward, played both piano and organ, and led the congregational singing from the piano. Edward, the eldest son, led the Sunday school singing at age twelve. When Hiebert came in 1925, he continued the tradition, but then had the difficult task of trying to integrate what Ben Horsch called the “urban church music environment” of Winnipeg, already well developed, with the “rural Russian church music environment” brought by the *Russlaender*. As we have seen, there were tensions for other reasons as well between the non-ethnic Mennonite Brethren of Lutheran background and the *Russlaender*. But North End young people of the 1920s were not satisfied with music standards that seemed below those they were being taught in Winnipeg schools or established by the Winnipeg music festivals as early as 1918.¹⁵



Music and Mission, 1953
Esther and Ben Horsch, on tour with MBBC choir.

Given such encouragement from the first three ministers of the North End church, Ben turned to music as a full-time career. His first appointment was to the Winnipeg Bible Institute, a missionary school, as music director (1932-39). In 1939 he went to BIOLA for its sacred music course. Then in 1943 he was called to return to Manitoba to teach at the Winkler Bible School. Already in the 1930s he had begun to offer choral workshops as part of the Conference *Gesangssache*. Quite literally this means “the matter of music in the congregation” and this was a most important facet of the innermost mission. Mention of its importance was registered in British Columbia as early as June 1933 when it was declared “a necessary adjunct to our work in the Lord’s vineyard.” The Herbert district report in 1937 stated that,

in order to elevate congregational and choir singing in the church, a course for choirs and their directors had been conducted by Ben Horsch and J. B. Wiebe. “The work was gratifying and well-received by all.”

Once Horsch had returned to Canada, the choral festivals and workshops reached their peak, not because of Horsch alone, but also because of the work of K. H. Neufeld (1892-1957) and Franz Thiessen (1881-1950). For example, in May 1944 Horsch did week-long workshops in Arnaud, Steinbach, Winkler, and Griswold. Jacob Wedel, a strong promoter of music in the North End and throughout Manitoba, reported that Horsch was giving great satisfaction with his unusual ability to teach good music and singing, but also to point the singer to his or her important role in the strengthening and edification of the church. Many others such as Dietrich Friesen continued this important task.

Not only did Horsch raise the level of musical and choral accomplishments by his own contributions but also through a long line of students at MBBC who carried his standard and spirit with them throughout the Conference. Ben and Esther Horsch, along with others, did much to give Canadian Mennonite Brethren the *Gesangbuch* of 1952 (the *Hymnbook* of 1959). It was a most remarkable achievement, giving us the songs and hymns, *Kernlieder*, germane to Mennonite Brethren faith. Their influence and standards, combining excellence and simplicity, permeated the Gospel Light Hour from the beginning, as well as many of the Bible schools and high schools. Much more research, however, needs to be done on those involved in this most important facet of the innermost dynamic.¹⁶



Ben Horsch and a cappella choir on tour 1951.
Back row: J. H. Quiring, Peter Penner, Paul Siemens, John Wittenberg, W. Mann, _____, R. Bartel, C. Braun, Ferne Hiebert, Bill Voth, behind her, C. Hiebert.
Front: _____, Esther Quiring, Esther Horsch, Emmeline Loewen, Lydia Krahn, Rita Mueller, Helen Kornelson, _____, Evelyn Beck, _____, Mary Klassen, G. Dyck, Ben Horsch, conductor.

The Canada Inland Mission on Paper

As we have indicated, the period of outreach before the war brought the official Home Missions Committee and the societal missions to the threshold of a unified, disciplined outreach to the unchurched, the indifferent, the German and Russian speaking people, the children, and those who

were even more disadvantaged in the depression than were Mennonites. Much of the discussion that led to the new conceptualization surfaced in Manitoba, partly because of Lindal, partly because of the lapse of the *Afrika-Missions Verein* (Africa Mission Society), and partly because the United Church of Canada appealed to the Mennonite Brethren to help their mission.



Lindal Church (1935)



Lindal families as seen Sept/57. (Lambrechts, Guderians, Shiskoskis, Balouns, Browns, Rachul, Peter & Eva Loewen, Teigroebes).

The farming community of Lindal in the Pembina Hills was served by John P. Braun of Morden's Mennonite Brethren church until wartime gas rationing curtailed his ministry. Gradually provision was made for a change. A church was built in 1939, and the purchase of a quarter section of land was finalized in 1944. A little house was built on this section for the family of Jake H. Kehler, who moved there in 1942. Kehler, a graduate of Winkler, inherited a tension-filled congregation. Not only were members there wondering about their identity, but even more importantly about their national loyalties. While some wondered whether they were indeed accepted as Mennonites even though baptized by Mennonite Brethren, others such as the Czechs were outraged by the way their homeland was treated by Hitler's Germany. In 1939 they transferred their membership, without reference to Morden, to a Winnipeg Baptist church. But then they requested the use, locally, of the (1-6) church built first for Jake Kehler. Eventually this problem was resolved, though Lindal always remained somewhat difficult because of its multicultural mix.¹⁷

It was in the midst of this discussion involving the purchase of property at Lindal and a proposal to extend Manitoba's outreach to Winnipegosis that H. S. Voth brought up the concept of the CIM. He challenged the brethren to take up the work. "Opportunities lie at our very doors," he exclaimed. "All we require is an organization, a system, and money!" C. A. DeFehr then explained that the charter of the Society, which was used a decade earlier to send the Henry Bartsch family to Africa, was still in force and could be used to launch a new umbrella mission. Manitoba brethren took this CIM proposal to the NDC in July of that year, while B. B. Janz presented it to his Alberta brethren in November 1944, and rationalized it thus: the CIM as a banner organization would provide an umbrella for Mennonite Brethren young people everywhere in service in Canada, and the new MBBC would provide trained missionaries "in our spirit and under our supervision" for the new thrust. He was so optimistic about it that he spoke of the WCCM of British Columbia as an arm of the CIM. (It was not until 1945 that A. A. Kroeker took the idea of the CIM to the NDC held in Yarrow.) Janz noted that thirty-one of our young brethren were serving in other churches where, "in some instances, they become

confused over the issue of child baptism, etc." Others, he said, were working in organizations "strange" to us. These circumstances, he thought, lay behind the thinking of the brethren.¹⁸

Strange as it may seem, in November 1944, as Janz was prematurely enlarging the sphere of the infant CIM, he seemed to think that the United Church was prepared to give over its Indian work to the NDC. Perhaps he was jumping to conclusions. Certainly he was concerned, as were many others, about influences from the outside. It is clear, however, that in Manitoba the UCC and the Mennonite Brethren joined hands for the last years of the war by providing places of service for a number of Mennonite Brethren who were of mobilization age, but were prepared for alternative service.

Though there is some vagueness as to how the association came about, it is evident that Kroeker had connections with UCC leadership in Manitoba. J. A. Cormie appeared at a Manitoba conference at La Salle in May 1940, accompanied by W. C. Graham of the United College. They were hosted by Kroeker who underlined the similarities between the two bodies in their primary concern for home missions. Cormie appeared again, with three officers of his church, at Steinbach two years later, and Herman Neufeld and George Pries were asked to reciprocate the visit in order to bring fraternal greetings to the Manitoba United Church Conference. One may conjecture that the thought occurred to Kroeker and/or Cormie that Mennonite conscientious objectors might be used as lay supply in United Church mission fields. Moreover, they might be able to serve there in lieu of alternative service in camps. Obviously, the United church, which also had some conscientious objectors, was feeling an acute shortage of workers by 1943. The June 1944 "Report on Home Missions" of the Manitoba United Church read in part:

We deeply sympathize with our Superintendent of Missions in his many war-time anxieties and are particularly gratified by his achievements in securing missionaries and teachers for seven vacancies in Indian fields a year ago. But for his wide-ranging enterprise and the friendly help of the Mennonite Brethren our report must have been of a serious loss, instead of encouraging progress. . . .¹⁹

The next report stated that except for the help from the Mennonite Brethren their work among Indians built up since 1840 "would have been lost." (By the way, the United Church was quite prepared in a reciprocal fashion to serve unshepherded Mennonite areas.) Among those who served in the capacity of lay supply were Alfred Kroeker, son of A. A. Kroeker, and E. Kroeger, Alfred's brother-in-law. Alfred served at Nelson House among Cree Indians from 1943 to 1946. He went there directly from an alternative service camp near Port Arthur, Ontario. Among names appearing in United Church annual yearbooks for this period are Willy Baerg, William Neufeld, William A. Dueck, J. Toews, N. Dueck, A. Friesen, John G. Kehler, Abram Neufeld, and E. C. Brandt. John M. Schmidt and Jacob A. Froese, prominent in these pages, also served with the United Church among the Sioux Indians from 1945-47 and on the Long Plains Indian Reserve near Portage.²⁰

As it turned out, the Africa Society charter could not be used. The alternative suggested by lawyers was that the NDC should obtain a new charter from the Canadian government

under the title "the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren of North America." Any and all agencies such as the CIM could be registered under such a charter given by Parliament. This was done in late 1945 and the Conference dropped the title NDC.²¹

Given the constitutional change, A. A. Kroeker presented a new brief with respect to the CIM. This stated that it would be best for the provinces (from British Columbia to Manitoba—Ontario not yet having joined) to continue their work as before. But a central office should be set up, consisting of a committee made up of the chairmen of provincial *Randmission* committees. CIM could be information-gathering, could serve as a "manpower" office, and scout new fields. He recommended that all provincial work should at least be placed under the banner of the CIM. An appropriate constitution would be worked out in due course.

Unfortunately, CIM remained a mission in theory for some years. The stated goal of gathering twenty thousand dollars as the initial capital for the new mission never materialized. As C. C. Peters noted in correspondence with H. H. Janzen in 1947, "Until now this Mission is only on paper. What must be done to give it vitality, and which projects will it actually undertake?" Upon exploring the question, Janzen replied that he found Kroeker, at that stage, indifferent as to CIM's institutionalization. CIM was not vitalized until given a budget in 1949. Though Winnipegosis workers thought of themselves as working under the CIM banner, the pay cheques were coming from Manitoba's Home Missions Committee and George Pries as treasurer. CIM awaited a better day.²²

Summary of Part One, 1983-1945

In sum, by the time the Great War of 1914 had come, the

Mennonite Brethren had come to appreciate some of the essentials of home missions. Pursuit of the scattered and scattering Mennonites using *Reiseprediger* seemed to have priority. *Auswaertigkeit*, going beyond themselves, was another concept. Involved in this was the principle of setting persons aside for special tasks. This was long since called *Abordnung*, commissioning, if you will. Conference structures were foundational as a launching pad and as a base to which to return. The Bible schools provided the trained personnel in an age of evangelical fervor whose great inspirators in North America were D. L. Moody and R. A. Torrey.

Between the wars, home missions came to be more clearly defined, even though it sometimes took a conflict of opinion to find a new *modus vivendi*. It was clear that incorporation or assimilation of various minority groups was not going to be easy. In fact, missions at "arm's-length," so characteristic of the period after the Second World War, was fairly built-in by 1940. Voluntarism was, however, a powerful force requiring the Conferences to accommodate the young within the Conference or see them leave to serve with those who would harness their energies.

The years of 1939 to 1945 again forced Mennonites to face the fundamental questions: who are we, why are we different, and do we really believe in applying the Sermon on the Mount in our time and world? New avenues of service were pointed out as a result of the great misery engulfing so many of the "household of faith." It became painfully obvious that if the Mennonite Brethren were going to survive after the war, the whole field of youth work would have to be strengthened. This led to the outgrowth of new institutions, mainly educational, but also a new conceptualization of mission, the CIM.

PART II
THE MISSION CHURCH
ERA,
1945-1960

IV

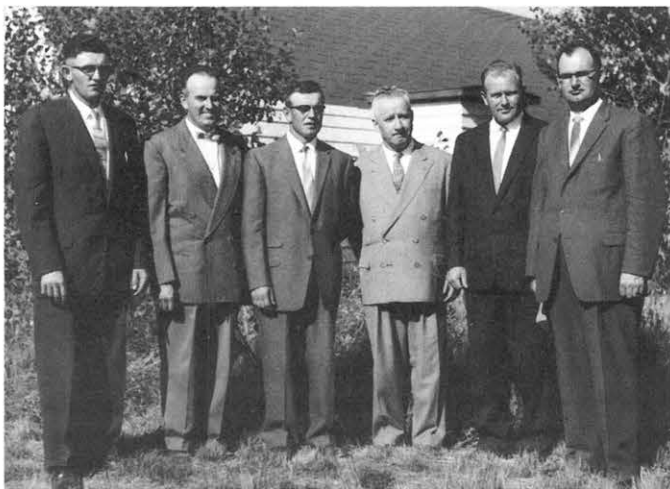
CANADA WIDE BROTHERHOOD CONCERNS

The Mennonite Brethren survived the war years with a keener awareness that the inward mission needed to be strengthened. The way to do this was by focusing on youth, their education and spiritual nurture. H. F. Klassen best expressed the aspirations of many in the Conference when he wrote in the first issue of the *KJ*:

What is our goal? We want to see our young grow up within their spiritual home, the Mennonite Brethren church, so that, joyously and courageously, without an inferiority complex, they can live for the Lord, serve in mission fields, near and far, and take our *Sonderkenntnis* [our position on peace, church and discipleship] unashamedly into a war-filled world.¹

Youth Work

The first Canadawide youth committee as part of the innermost mission was organized in 1945. Under the chairmanship of H. F. Klassen, various doctrinal booklets were translated into English. The *KJ* was launched, and the best writers helped in what became a "strong unifying influence among the young people." In 1957 the *KJ* was merged with the English-language *Mennonite Observer*, edited for the first year by Leslie Stobbe, and published by the Christian Press between 1956 and 1961. *The Youth Worker*, edited by Walter and Katie Wiebe, appeared in 1952. By 1960 it was possible to set aside a week in January as "youth week." Not until 1971, however, was it possible to have a countrywide youth rally at Banff, Alberta. Provincial Conference youth committees, whose chairmen related to the larger Conference, tended to coordinate their youth activities with the larger vision. Youth rallies as they developed tended to emphasize missions, Christian discipleship, and service to the community. With youth in mind, the idea of a conference evangelist was proposed and adopted in 1959.



Alberta Youth committee with I. W. Redekopp 1959.
Peter Doerksen, Henry Wiebe, Henry Peters, IWR, Peter Rempel, A. P. Regier.

While the Bible school movement had by no means ended, what seemed even more important in 1945 was to provide high school education directed by Mennonite Brethren societies or provincial Conferences. Astonishingly, five high schools appeared as if on cue. All were congregational or societal in their original sponsorship. The Mennonite Educational Institute (MEI) in Clearbrook had a head start of only one year over the others. Winnipeg's Mennonite Brethren Collegiate Institute (MBCI), Virgil's Eden, and Yarrow's Sharon Mennonite Collegiate were all launched in 1945, and Coaldale's Alberta Mennonite High School in 1946. Whereas in the 1930s many leading Mennonite Brethren took a protective attitude toward Rosthern Academy and Mennonite Collegiate Institute in Gretna, both United Mennonite institutions, in the period following the war, the Mennonite Brethren consolidated their stronghold by undertaking this ambitious program of fostering private education for their youth. Students, of course, were not drawn only from Mennonite Brethren congregations. Only in Clearbrook was there a close working relationship with the West Abbotsford United Mennonite church. Within ten years, under the forceful leadership of John Harder of Yarrow, the advocacy of Henry B. Thiessen in Ontario, and above all the eloquent declamations of C. F. Klassen and Franz Thiessen in Manitoba, the Christian high school was securely established. While the Bible schools received renewed vindication in the pages of the *KJ*, an equally large number of articles appeared in support of the high schools. In 1955 Victor Adrian described them as "our greatest mission field" (that is, of the innermost mission). In fact, in March of 1956, when Henry Unrau, then with the CSSM, preached at the MEI, an "old fashioned revival" swept the campus.²



MEI 1960
Bill Wiebe, principal; F. C. Peters, guest speaker.



Eden Christian College
The 1945 section is front and left. The old gym added later is behind that; the new gym is on the right.



East Chilliwack M.B. church and East Chilliwack Bible School building, with Mount Cheam in the background, 1958.

Bible Schools East and West

One cannot bypass the Bible schools that were started in the postwar period. The last one to be opened, East Chilliwack Bible School, had a life of thirteen years (1947-1959). Another, the Ontario Bible School, proved to have a checkered history. Actually, it began with evening classes in 1938 in Virgil. These proliferated and were carried on for several years. A societal day school was opened by B. B. Boldt and H. Voth in the Vineland Mennonite Brethren church on November 22, 1939, just after the war began. The author was himself a student there in 1941-42, when the Royal Canadian Mounted Police paid a visit. Many Canadians then believed that German-language use meant pro Germanism, and perhaps there was some cause, as we have indicated in a previous chapter. The fact of the matter was that the *Russlaender* immigrants had not yet built up sufficient confidence among neighbors to gain their support against such intervention. It seemed the better part of wisdom for the society to close the doors of the school for the duration of the war. Actually, the evening class at Virgil was transformed

into a day school in 1943, and a revived society launched a Bible school of three classes in 1944. In 1948, this became the Ontario Conference school. It was transferred to Kitchener in 1955, where it remained until its closing in 1966.

More important, as it turned out, was the school begun in the Abbotsford/Clearbrook area, which became the Mennonite Brethren Bible Institute, and then was transformed much later into today's Columbia Bible Institute (now College). As the South Abbotsford church may be considered the "mother church" in the Clearbrook area, the Bible school initiated there as early as 1936 and formalized in 1944 may be considered the forerunner of the MBBI. This school was promised an extended life when Yarrow's "Elim" was discontinued in 1955 and East Chilliwack closed four years later.³

University Students

Another facet of youth work that had implications for witness was the increasing brotherhood concern for the university student. What would become of high school graduates once they got to the university campus? Though many attended a Bible school first, a considerable number were going directly into university studies from senior matriculation.

University students first came to be noticed when they organized themselves at the University of Manitoba in 1950 as an Association of Mennonite University Students (AMUS). Inter-Mennonite, AMUS debated such areas as the Christian in politics and business ethics. They found commendation from the young *Canadian Mennonite* in Altona, and soon reported to the Manitoba Conference. Soon there was a Menno House for students at the University of Toronto. Here they debated the use of the name Mennonite as well as the viability of the interdenominational Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship (IVCF) as an adequate avenue of witness for Mennonites on university campuses.

At the University of British Columbia (UBC), Peter



MBBI, Clearbrook, 1961. Teachers: Seated: H. H. Nikkel, G. Konrad, N. Willems. Standing: H. P. Neufeldt, John B. Epp.

Thiessen reported that AMUS was organized to prevent Mennonite students from being submerged "in this sea of secular society." This view was challenged by the proposition that Mennonite students should join hands with IVCF. This group believed, as a *CM* headline put it, that "Mennonite Student Cliques Prevent Outreach." Did the presence of AMUS in fact detract from the effectiveness of IVCF? This debate was carried on in the pages of the *CM* for two months. It seemed that the IVCF supporters had the last word. One eventual outgrowth of this creative tension, at least for Mennonite Brethren youth, was the Point Grey Fellowship, organized around 1965 and disbanded within two years.⁴

In the midst of the AMUS phenomenon, the Canadian Committee of Reference and Counsel sounded an alarm and thus triggered a consideration that eventually led to the formation of a "Student Services" program. The Committee lamented that "among our [university students] some have lost a grip on their faith or, if not, the experience has nevertheless been convulsive. . . . How can we help these young people in their doubts and struggles?" Though the relationship was not clearly recognized, it was evident that the "economic revolution" that had overtaken the Mennonite Brethren was having an effect on students at every level. J. B. Toews, speaking on the spiritual struggle of the Mennonite Brethren church as reflected in the Bible schools and high schools, understood this very well. "Education is based on economic necessity and spiritual values are forced into the background," he said.

The upshot of the subsequent discussion was the appointment of a study commission comprising Bible and high school teachers, appointed at the conference of 1955. Among those appointed were Peter Barga, Coaldale, and Walter Wiebe, Hepburn. Two years later, this study commission seems to have been transformed into a committee on education (*ein Bildungskomitee*). Their report may be seen as an elaborate restructuring of the Conference and provincial educational efforts so as to provide a place for every young person within the brotherhood, at all levels, perhaps even a liberal arts division. There was no grappling with the fundamental question raised two years earlier about how to help the university student existentially. Rather, the resolution inferred that all students ideally should be in a Mennonite Brethren school. But evidence kept piling up that Mennonite Brethren were now university-bound.

When other Mennonite groups invited the Mennonite Brethren of Ontario to consider building a residential college (the future Conrad Grebel) on the campus of the University of Waterloo, the new Education committee was charged with a study of that and alternative proposals for a liberal arts division already on the board. The Conference elected to develop its own liberal arts wing at MBBC rather than become involved in the creation of Conrad Grebel College. Meanwhile, there was virtually no recognition given to the need to prepare young people to cope with university studies in the pure and practical sciences, nor in the questing and thrusting atmosphere of a liberal arts education on the best Canadian campuses. In 1961, a rather general resolution was passed, "to assist our students in finding solutions to their problems, while in attendance at secular Universities and Colleges." This is the only direct reference to the problem raised in 1955.⁵

Long before Point Grey Fellowship brought up the question



**Peter Barga, Edmonton & St. Albert (1966).
Educational Administrator.**

in Mennonite Brethren circles of whether a university group could be a church, AMUS in Edmonton answered that, at least in part, in the affirmative. In about 1956, John Unrau, a geneticist in the Department of Agriculture, began to take an active interest in Alberta's university students. With the help of Peter Barga, who was establishing himself as an Alberta educational administrator, an AMUS group was formed. It met in Unrau's house and was soon debating a key question: are we as Mennonite youth free to explore and to doubt? Can we expect "openness and honesty" in the brotherhood? About the same time, a group of summer-school students, mostly teachers, began to meet in John Neufeld's house, because it was becoming only too obvious that Mennonites settling in Edmonton were joining the Alliance and Baptist churches.



Edmonton, Alberta, 1958.

The early Lendrum group: Jake and Irene Isaac on the right and Anne Kornelson in the front row. Bernard Sawatsky is in the middle row just to the right of the door frame.

Edmonton's groups invited the Conference leadership at Coaldale to visit Edmonton in 1956. As a result, David Pankratz expressed interest in helping, though, as Peter Barga recalled, there was some mutual suspicion. Edmonton residents, many from Coaldale, feared parental church control and a damper on the questing mind, and Coaldale was suspicious of the "university crowd." Nevertheless, as will be shown, Bernard Sawatsky moved to Edmonton in 1957 and began to gather together Mennonite Brethren families. From Sawatsky's house the group went to the YMCA and finally to the Forest Hill Community Hall. As a result, and as will be shown more fully later, a Gospel Light Mission church was chartered on November 29, 1959.⁶

Point Grey Fellowship

The Point Grey Fellowship experience, which had far-reaching implications, answered the question about

students and church in the negative. P. R. Toews, pastor of Fraserview Church and chairman of the Mennonite Brethren Mission of British Columbia, stated with reference to Point Grey that "strong leadership" would be required "to give our students and youth the direction they need to yield themselves and their talents to Christ and their cause." Further investigations were to be made to understand that cause fully and the course it might take. The general problem was to be turned over to the Conference committee on Christian education, on the assumption that this kind of group required a special kind of ministry.

That Point Grey may have posed a difficult problem for Vancouver and Fraser Valley churches, even Fraserview, has been explained in various ways. One explanation, with several fears expressed, came in 1965 from the British Columbia Conference Committee of Reference and Counsel. Its members believed that a vast potential lay in this group, but having a church of "students only could result in a negative situation." It was widely assumed that the spiritual casualty rate among university students was very high. Another explanation put forward by Ron Friesen takes into account the sociological fact that Vancouver had no Mennonite Brethren churches west of Main Street. Point Grey, if established, would be located outside the "ethnic village" in southeastern Vancouver. Ethnic settlement patterns were so much a part of the built-in prejudices that settlement west of Main Street "was never accepted as a possible residence and even the prospect of a church could not change those entrenched settlement patterns."⁷

Besides this ethnic impact, the fears for and about students, and the realization that part of the city and the thrusting world of the intellect had been neglected, another explanation lies in the ephemeral reality of the situation. Helga (Kutz) Harder wrote that she and other participants knew that Point Grey, which met in the home of Art Block, "was never intended to last:"

It was born out of the restlessness of the '60s, the product of the Christian students who did not want to fit the mould of the M.B. church in Vancouver, and who [yet] insisted they were M.Bs. We felt we had a duty to question everything, and we didn't find any [adequate] response in the established M.B. church. We knew it was temporary, idealistic, risky . . . highly personal. . . . It was carved out of nothing to suit particular needs.

When each group of students left, it changed shape.

Perhaps it was this ephemerality, this constant change, that mystified and frustrated the CRC. In any case, students were frustrated also, and in 1968 told the CRC they no longer wanted to relate to the Mennonite Brethren Mission of British Columbia.⁸

Nevertheless, having been prodded to find a solution, George Braun as director of the Mission (the very group Point Grey no longer wished to relate to) brought forward a rationale and recommendations in 1969. Fundamentally, it was held that the needs of the students "were basically the same as that of any other believer." Yet their situation was compounded by a "challenging intellectual environment not oriented to the Word of God." It was felt that students needed to be able to relate meaningfully to a "group of positive vibrant believers through fellowship, sharing, and Bible study in which they can expose their problems, be received, and contribute to others within the framework of the fellowship."

For many this was too little too late and the plan as formulated did not materialize. A decision was then reached to leave the questions of the students to the local congregations, and to any student service as such that might be devised at the Canadian Conference level. Even then, however, there were further elaborations of the question in British Columbia that acknowledged that student needs in fact were different, and a puzzle to the church. In Helga Harder's view, the fact that Point Grey evaporated simply meant it was no longer needed. It lasted long enough to give Mennonite Brethren students at UBC "the structural nurture they needed." She ended on a note of sadness, nevertheless, because far too many of those involved then are not Mennonite Brethren today. In fact, some were threatened by excommunication, not for any wrongs done but for what they may have believed.⁹

Clearly, neither the Edmonton nor the Vancouver experience proved very gratifying at the time, when one considers the indigestion suffered in the process of seeking a solution. The question of student services was given to the Canadian education committee. Partly as a result of some prodding from Ontario, and in conjunction with Vernon Wiebe from Hillsboro, a decision was reached that the question might best be pursued on an inter-Mennonite basis. There was the opportunity of sending graduate students to the Mennonite Graduate Seminar held annually at Elkhart. (It was for the seminar of 1964 that Victor Adrian prepared his statement entitled "The Mennonite Brethren Church: Born of Anabaptism and Pietism.") In 1963 Peter Penner was asked to prepare a series of articles for the *Mennonite Brethren Herald* and the *Christian Leader*. John Wiebe continued these in 1965.

Not much more than these articles and the annual preparation of a student survey were done until 1966, when the reorganized Conference gave student services to the Board of Higher Education. The Board, in its first report on this subject, concluded that a "really meaningful ministry . . . is possible only on an individual and personal basis. . . ." Subsequently Vern Ratzlaff and James Pankratz, while teaching at MBBC, visited campuses in order to make contact with students. This much seems to have been undertaken because of criticism such as that offered in 1968 by Leonard B. Siemens, who teaches at the University of Manitoba. In a statement on priorities for the Manitoba Conference, (and wider afield) he said, "I cannot see that our Conference has either a policy or a program of ministry to university students."

It was becoming clear in the early 1970s that students needed to become involved in witness themselves, and that therefore they were to be encouraged to relate to existing "Christian resources" on the various campuses. Pankratz told the Canadian Conference in 1976 that

the most effective relationships in the ministry to post-secondary students are established on a given campus or in a local church. The task of student services is as much with the churches as with the students from the churches.

We must as a brotherhood, learn how to use the experiences and insights of our students. They also want to share their enthusiasm and discovery, not only the trials of their faith. . . .

By this time more people were accepting change and were also prepared to see the students as a wholesome influence in the congregations. In fact, many were proving to be just that.¹⁰

The Third Immigration

These emphases on strengthening basic institutions, especially the educational, coincided with the third great immigration of Mennonites to Canada. Concern for *Hilfswerk* was revived as the Mennonite Central Committee, under the leadership of C. F. Klassen and J. J. Thiessen, tried to meet the exigencies of the aftermath of the war. The latter, in his report to the Canadian Conference in 1948 at Port Dalhousie, stated, "The story of the refugee is a profound tragedy, made up of the fateful experiences of many individuals."¹¹ Paderborn and Gronau, in Europe and Paraguayan colonies, became familiar household terms in Canadian Mennonite homes as people became aware of the almost unbelievable stories involving our own people, their rescue, detention in Europe, and eventual migration to Canada, some after years in Paraguay. They came, more than twelve thousand strong, to Mennonite congregations and were welcomed and integrated between 1947 and 1961. The story has been told mainly in terms of "rescue and resettlement" in its largest perspective. The more intimate and sometimes problematic relationships at the congregational level are doubtless to be found in church minutes. Presumably all were brought into membership with the help of essentially the same guidelines H. S. Voth used in 1929.

Certain congregations such as St. Catharines, Kitchener, Winnipeg, Saskatoon, and Vancouver felt the impact of this migration more than others. All experienced rapid increases in membership. Yet if Scott Street Church's experience in St. Catharines is any guide, the increase from three hundred members in 1953 to nearly twice that number in one decade, hardly caused a stir, at least as seen retrospectively. Except for the membership graph, the migration is not even mentioned in the anniversary history covering the years of 1943 to 1968.¹²

As is well known, however, the integration of these displaced persons slowed the language change considerably, but not their ongoing assimilation and urbanization. In fact, the newcomers were swept along rapidly, except in the matter of the language of worship. The pressures nevertheless were profound enough to create the model of church planting by division, or the "mothering" of new congregations. Some had argued that language should not be the basis of "multiplication by division," but the sociological forces were simply too strong. Even though Scott Street did engage in the "legitimate compromise" of bilingual services suggested by J. A. Toews in 1961, it decided to sponsor a second church, instead of building an addition. The result was Fairview Mennonite Brethren Church, built in 1964. One model they may have had in mind was Virgil's assistance to the Niagara Christian Fellowship Chapel a decade earlier. Frasersview Church in Vancouver was an even earlier offshoot (in 1952) of the mother church there, at Forty-third Avenue and Prince Edward Street. Willingdon, Killarney Park, and Culloden Churches followed in due course.¹³



Canadian Conference Executive, 1952.
Henry Regehr, Secretary and Statistician, Henry H. Janzen, moderator, John A. Harder, vice-moderator.

Is the Church in Danger?

The mid fifties brought on an identity crisis, not of the same intensity as two decades later, but yet certain factors forced the question — what is it to be Mennonite Brethren and are we justified in our doctrinal and ethical position? The editor of the *Mennonite Observer* in 1957 introduced a series of articles entitled "The Church in Danger" with a statement about a number of warnings that had been given to the brotherhood concerning trends and weaknesses that were endangering the Mennonite Brethren church. Five men who might be singled out as having voiced those warnings were B. B. Janz and A. A. Toews of Alberta, H. F. Klassen and A. H. Unruh of Manitoba and J. A. Toews. In the early fifties Toews was just getting into stride as an articulator of "the Mennonite Brethren way." Janz had asked the above questions since the mid thirties, and he kept asking persistently until he retired. More germane to the present discussion were the articles by A. A. Toews and H. F. Klassen. Toews asked without apology in 1952, "Is our separation [non-conformity or anti-worldly stance] justified?" His answer was an unqualified "yes." He saw only pitfalls and shoals ahead unless the younger generation adhered to guidelines of behavior toward those outside the Mennonite fold as taught by their fathers. Toews, like his son J. A. after him, focused on Anabaptist-Mennonite faith principles, and Klassen, a younger man, seemed just as unyielding. The latter stated, "When the time comes that we are convinced that our understanding of what makes us distinct from other Christian persuasions no longer has scriptural foundations, only then will we be justified in letting our identity and adherence to the Mennonite Brethren go." He was still convinced that the Mennonite Brethren had an obligation under the lordship of Christ to carry the Anabaptist burden of witness to foundational truths neglected by others. These truths stood as a challenge to the state in matters of war and peace, the believers' church, and discipleship. "When we lose these emphases," he stated, "then all our superb effort in support of our institutions will be wasted."¹⁴

Unruh, who had reached the peak of his influence by that time and was busy compiling a history of his church, sounded the alarm as none other when he wrote his much-quoted article in *The Voice* of MBBC, entitled "The Breach in the Transmitted Ordinances of the Mennonite Brethren

Church." Very briefly and explicitly he stated what those ethical ordinances had been understood to be, precisely how he thought the breach had been made in the dams that had been laboriously fashioned, and what the consequences would be.

Toews and Unruh acknowledged the dangers of legalism, and they allowed for the blessings of a greater freedom than the founding fathers had tolerated, but they feared the result of rapid adaptation of congregational life to the prevailing lifestyle and the giving up of church discipline. Romans 12:1-2, which speaks of non-conformity to the world, was often used as a text, and guidelines for Christian conduct were set forth from it. Unruh feared that following ninety-three "good years," with respect to reaching a brotherhood consensus on unworldly-mindedness, the church was now reaping a harvest of "lean years." The reference to ninety-three years referred presumably to the ethical stance taken by those at Elisabethal who seceded from the general Mennonite establishment in the Ukraine on January 6, 1860. The eighteen signatories who made up the founding Mennonite Brethren fathers threw up fundamental points about doctrinal ordinances, but these had been triggered by outward decadence and corruption of the whole Mennonite *Bruderschaft* (or *Gemeinde* in the sense of municipality). The separation was compelled by ethical considerations. It was their earnestness and radical treatment of sin that Toews and Unruh thought was being relaxed.¹⁵

The central issues confronted by "the church in danger" series were "neglect of evangelism," "materialism," the collapse of "spiritual vitality," divisiveness, and "false doctrine." Guest editorials on these sub-themes faced the readers of the *Mennonite Observer* between August 9 and September 27, 1957. Writing on materialism, J. A. Toews stated what his father had inferred much earlier:

Far too many parents send their children to secular schools not in order to equip them more adequately for a life of service for God and man, but in order to enable them to make more money as quickly as possible. Preparation to make a living, and not make a life is manifestation of a 'this-worldly' materialistic outlook on life.¹⁶

Others who participated in this series were J. H. Quiring, Walter Wiebe, P. R. Toews, and H. R. Baerg. Strange, perhaps, from this perspective, is the fact that the burning issue before the Conference between 1954 and 1961 — the use and abuse of television — was not raised outrightly in these editorials. The causes for the breakdown of standards and the dangers might be summed up as personal aggrandizement and suburbanization, rapid assimilation and cultural change, educational achievements, professionalism, and occupational mobility.¹⁷

As a result of a decade of debate about scriptural guidelines for adapting to change, including a controversial assessment of the church by Delbert Wiens, and the help of A. E. Janzen of Hillsboro, the church seemed to settle on a set of distinctives said to characterize the Mennonite Brethren church. Toews summed them up in his 1975 *History* in seven sub-themes: practical non-propositional biblicism; experiential faith, emphasizing the reality of conversion; personal witnessing; Christian discipleship in

ethical issues, including non-resistance; the brotherhood emphasis to counteract [North] American individualism; evangelism and a missionary concern; and a Christ-centered eschatology. Essentially, they are an amalgam of Anabaptist, Pietistic, and Baptist influences, colored by fundamentalism and dispensationalism.¹⁸

Decentralization

As will be pointed out with reference to the Canada Inland Mission there was some confusion about jurisdictional lines, or where responsibility should, for practical reasons, be placed. Much of this was clarified by a major constitutional shakedown that came in 1954. In the United States Conference, home missions as outreach had become a statistical exercise by 1945, and A. E. Janzen lamented that this was so. Following the lapse of the mission to the Jews in 1954 and the transfer of the Minneapolis city mission to the Central District Conference, no home mission was left, though it was revived in the later "decade of enlargement" program. Toews, a participant in 1954, later called it a "constitutional crisis." From this perspective it does not appear so radical, but changes were made, and the General Conference reserved responsibility for foreign missions, general welfare and public relations, publications, and the seminary question. All else was transferred to the district conferences.

Within the Canadian Conference, it also seemed propitious to expedite decentralization wherever possible. While home missions by biblical definition is, and should be, centrifugal in its dynamic, jurisdictional responsibility seems to tend toward the centripetal. The Kaufmann-Harder study of 1975 in its survey of this question discovered that decentralization into regional Conferences was more compelling than the reverse into national ones. Decentralization became compelling once the Canada Inland Mission (CIM) was organized on paper. What would it do in practice?¹⁹

The Canada Inland Mission in Practice

On the Canadian scene this period of reorganization was characterized by a sometimes frustrating search for a mission at home that would challenge and harness the voluntarist spirit that was quite strong across the country. The CIM, as indicated, hung in limbo until 1949 when its committee was given a small budget. Gradually, it was agreed that the CIM should concentrate on "*besondere Volksgruppen*," that is, categories of ethnics and, quite specifically, Russians, Jews, Japanese, and Native Canadians.

Given this clearer focus, the CIM committee recommended a new administrative model. Two brethren from British Columbia and one from Saskatchewan, the homes of the WCCM and the WCM respectively, should form the executive, together with chairmen from the other provincial home missions committees, to make up the annual standing committee of the CIM. This committee would execute Canadian Conference decisions, supervise and provide liaison, scout new fields, and prepare an annual report and budget. For the year 1949-50 the committee was limited to five thousand dollars to be distributed by the Conference treasurer, C. A. DeFehr.²⁰

This diminutive beginning can be explained. Russian work, as well as work among the Indians and Japanese at

Port Edward, was not transferred until 1949. The Jewish mission was not really given to CIM until 1955, when in fact the resignation of the missionaries had already written *finis* to that subject. Meanwhile in 1955-56, CIM had a peak budget of seventeen thousand dollars. Even though CIM was used as a blanket term in some quarters, such as Winnipegosis and Ashern, or for purposes of amalgamating reports for the Canadian Conference, the administration remained loose. It met only once each year at Conference time. Correspondence between Henry Warkentin, who served as a non-salaried executive secretary between 1955 and 1957, and the Conference treasurer indicates that the former had very little room to maneuver in regard to finances. In fact, when the administration of former CIM fields was turned over to the provinces in 1957-58, the CIM itself was almost "laid to rest." As Henry Warkentin has written, "subsidization [by the center] without administrative representation will not work long." By 1958 it seemed only too logical for CIM to limit itself to a coordinating role where provincially-based projects were involved. Fortunately, the decision of 1959 to use the more or less defunct CIM to investigate possibilities in Quebec gave it and its chairman new life.²¹

The Russian Mission

As shown earlier, concern for "our beloved Russian brethren" surfaced first within the North Saskatchewan district before the formation of the NDC. The story of Hermann Fast and the organization of the Russian brethren into their own conference in 1908 has been told. For reasons that are not altogether clear, during the thirties and forties, ever more insistent appeals came from those itinerating among Russian-speakers that some direct assistance should be given. One of these, David B. Wiens, declared that there was "a great field" and, as he spoke the language, he felt responsible for its use, and therefore also for those who still spoke the language.

Whatever the causes, beside the general lostness or "coming short of the glory of God" by all men, one important link between the Russian brethren and the Mennonite Brethren before the end of the war was H. H. Janzen of the Ontario Conference, a member of the *BK*. Janzen reported to the Ontario Conference in November, 1944 that in the spring of 1943, the *BK* had called together a committee of representative Canadian brethren at Winnipeg to supervise work among Russians. From his position as chairman of the Board of Foreign Missions (BFM) and, as one interested in launching a Canadawide mission, he found support there for those itinerating among Russians: Abram Huebert of Leamington, J. Thiessen, and himself. In 1945, when he became the principal of the Russian Bible Institute, located at People's Church, in Toronto, Janzen was asked by the *BK* to supervise this ministry.

As the RBI in Toronto was supported by the Russian Gospel Mission of Chicago, which was supporting Peter Schroeders in Edmonton (where earlier John F. Harms had preached to Russians), the connections were extended. Five thousand dollars were given by the *BK* for work among Russians in Canada, and Peter Schroeder and his family moved to Grand Forks, British Columbia, where some of this money was devoted to the construction of a building for work among the Doukhobors of the area. George Martens, who



Ministry to the Russians, c. 1950

Abram Huebert, Leamington, in B.C. practicing songs with a quartet of Russian ladies: Lydia Liashkevitch, Galina Balabanoff, Mary Mayduk, Olga Balabanoff.

studied under Janzen in Toronto, moved to Grand Forks with his wife, Erna, in 1948, first to assist the Schroeders, but then to take over the work among Doukhobors. When Janzen left Toronto to teach at MBBC, his supervision lapsed, and American interest declined. To illustrate, in 1944, \$215 went through the BFM treasury for this work; in 1947 it was over \$5,000; but after the CIM took over the work in 1949, only \$10.98 was transferred.²²

This was the opportunity created for the CIM. For the period when it had the Russian work under its supervision — 1949 to 1958 — essentially three facets were involved: Grand Forks, Abram Huebert's itineration, and the ministry of David Wiens. With respect to Grand Forks, Schroeder made his first and last report to the Canadian Conference in 1949. The Martens then took over and remained in a mostly self-employed position, by preference, until 1983. This story will be told in conjunction with the provincial outreach of British Columbia. The Grand Forks property was transferred to the Canadian Conference and the CIM during the years 1948 and 1950. Still another administrative change came in 1958 when Grand Forks was given over to the WCCM, which in turn became the Mennonite Brethren Mission of British Columbia.²³

Other individuals made significant contributions to the work among the Russians. A. A. Huebert itinerated for several months each year until 1954. He was a willing and able servant in the Russian language. He had a great interest in music, and several extant pictures show him surrounded by Russian young people singing heartily. He translated many hymns into Russian and taught them wherever he went.

More significant in the long run was the ministry of David Bernhard Wiens (1908-1981), who devoted himself to Russian work for over twenty years. Following training at BBS in Hepburn and the Western Baptist Bible College in Calgary, Wiens began his ministry of preaching and conducting a Bible school at Arelee in 1943. In about 1950, he explored the possibility of preaching among Doukhobors around Blaine Lake as well. His itineration gradually expanded and occasionally he travelled with Huebert. He helped Arelee to achieve independence and take its place within the Conference,



Warman, Sask. (1954)
David B. Wiens, J. H. Enns, Speedwell church leader, and Norman Fehr, who married Mary Loewen.

though this was not formalized until 1967. Eminently suited by personality, persuasion, and talents in the Russian language, he was called to serve in Europe, beginning in



Arelee (Russian) M.B. Church, successor to Eagle Creek & Petrofka.
(taken in 1979).

1955. As a result, he became the first Mennonite Brethren to visit the Soviet Union in 1956, in conjunction with Harold S. Bender of Goshen. Following that trip, he became the pastor of Vancouver's first Mennonite Brethren church. But even from that post he continued what he had begun at Arelee in 1953: he made tapes of gospel messages in Russian for transmission to Russia by the Gospel Light Hour in Winnipeg. He remained in this field of broadcasting, even into retirement.²⁴

The Gospel Witness to Jews

Administratively speaking, the work among the Jews was even more frustrating than getting the work among Rus-

sians organized and, for the workers, even more disappointing. Even though the monies came from the GC/BFM until its demise, the mission itself was so much a Canadian phenomenon that it is included here. Unfortunately, none of those associated with the Winnipeg Mennonite Brethren mission to Israel seem to have found a Nathaniel sitting under the fig [oak] tree as did Jesus, the Master Missionary, in search of disciples (John 1:43-51). Interest in Jews dated back to at least 1918 when Hugo Spitzer, a Hebrew Christian and missionary to the Jews in Winnipeg, first appeared at the Northern District Conference. Until about 1932, he reported intermittently and so persuasively that some brethren called him "our missionary to the Jews" and Bestvater, a strong dispensationalist, warmly recommended support for Spitzer's work in 1929. While he always claimed to be having good attendance in a Sunday school class, Spitzer too complained about the general indifference of Jews to New Testament teachings. Those in a good position to evaluate his ministry found him unsystematic and too interested in fundraising. When he was replaced at his retirement, he interfered with his replacement to the extent that the latter went to Buffalo.²⁵

Nevertheless, interest in a mission to the Jews was maintained through the work of H. K. Hiebert, a member of the North End Church. He was said to be uniquely prepared to make contact with Jews because in Russia he had lived among them. The Manitoba Conference supported him in his tract distribution and colportage beginning in 1939 with twenty-five dollars a month.



The Jewish Mission in Winnipeg.
The Jacob Pankratz family (c. 1948)
Martha, Ruth, and James.

In 1947, when the city mission committee of the *BK* was looking for another field of service, they decided to engage Jacob H. Pankratz, formerly of Coaldale, for a "Gospel Witness to Israel" in Winnipeg. One of the first Coaldale Bible School students, he was converted there and then attended PBI where he contemplated missionary service in the Seychelles Islands. For this purpose he also studied at the Missionary Health Institute in conjunction with People's Church in Toronto. It was there, following his marriage to Margaret Huebert, daughter of A. A. Huebert, the itinerant among Russians, that he found his vocation as a missionary under the Toronto Jewish Mission. He believed he had received a definite call to work among Jews. He always maintained that this was absolutely required for a work so difficult, so thankless, and what Unruh called "self-denying."

Having had a thorough apprenticeship in Toronto over a period of five years, he began his ministry in Winnipeg in January 1948. Though often discouraged, he persisted in house and hospital visits, and made many contacts, always attempting to leave a New Testament, especially in Jewish business establishments.

After about four years he was able to gather up as many as forty-five Jewish boys for a woodworking class that he conducted in the basement of the Conference-owned residence. Unfortunately, however, this promising work was shut down when the story of this woodworking class was taken to the "Israelite Press." This abrupt downturn, and the overall discouraging scene only added to the pathos of the work generally.

Moreover, as a result, no doubt, of the unceasing footslogging involved in the reliance on public transportation, Pankratz's feet gave out unexpectedly, as the report says. When he requested the use of a car, this was denied by the BK committee. Had he been given a vehicle, he would have continued. His heart was in the work. His reports were thorough and a mission to the Jews was never more magnificently rationalized from the Epistle to the Romans than in his sermon of 1946 dealing with "the divine plan for Jews and Gentiles."²⁶

Since Pankratz came to believe that the BK was not really committed to a Jewish work, it is of interest to explore the reluctance to continue the work. Clearly, Pankratz differentiated between dedication to such a work and a mere decision to support it. Pankratz knew how tenuous that support was. On the one hand, he had been asked to go to Winnipeg so that the BK committee would no longer be embarrassed that it had only one work, in Minneapolis. On the other hand, that committee was already debating in 1948 whether city mission work should be the responsibility of district Conferences.

Nevertheless, when this committee, of which J.A. Toews was a member, accepted Pankratz's resignation, they found replacements in George and Tina Konrad. He was a 1953 graduate of MBBC. Konrad left the work after one year, however, because of its inherent frustrations and difficulties. In his report he listed the "spiritual blindness" of the Jews, and their prejudices against Christianity. Only occasionally did anyone indicate the slightest desire for the Word. And, if figures counted, there was simply no one to point to as having been added to the church. Given this turn of events, the committee recommended that the work in Winnipeg, including the property, be transferred to the Canadian Conference. After all, the CIM was concerned with "*besondere Gruppen*."

Although in 1956 the CIM thought it advisable that the Jewish work be integrated with Winnipeg's city mission, perhaps by the appointment of another person, this issue was not faced by Manitoba because the Canadian Committee of Reference and Counsel decided to have another look at work among Jews. This expedient seemed to spell disengagement. A year later, C. A. DeFehr was still holding nine thousand dollars with which to service the mortgage at 287 West Kildonan, but nothing more was done.²⁷

The Pankratz ministry did not end in 1953. The family moved to Virgil where they participated in the ministry of the Niagara Christian Fellowship Chapel, a recent daughter church of the Virgil Mennonite Brethren Church. He also

worked as a carpenter. After that he returned to Jewish work in Montreal (1966-72) where he baptized eight converts. At age sixty-six he and Margaret went to teach in the Brake Bible school, near Bielefeld, Westphalia. He was on loan from the Bible Christian Union of Montreal.²⁸

Port Edward, British Columbia

A third area that for some time fit into CIM's general responsibility for ethnic groups was the effort to reach Indians and Japanese in the Skeena River country, along British Columbia's Route #16 to Prince Rupert. In 1949, George Sukkau, as a member of CIM and WCCM, reported that Indian Affairs of British Columbia had indicated they would welcome teachers from Mennonite circles in schools on Indian reserves. A year later, he affirmed this news as "the finger of God" pointing to this field and reported that six teachers had been appointed, among them John Froese and his wife Gertrude, a nurse, at Kincolith (Portland Inlet). Froese told the Canadian Conference in 1952 that the Anglican church, unable to recruit young ministers for such areas, had seventy-five empty church buildings in the vast Kincolith school district. This field undoubtedly presented a great challenge, but it could not be taken up by the Mennonite Brethren because it was an Anglican preserve.

Meanwhile, Hazelton had become another consideration because several families, those of John Kornelson and George Stobbe, had settled there in 1949 with a mission in mind. In the hopes that someone would be found to settle in this area, the CIM committee put aside twelve hundred dollars.



Port Edward, B.C., Sunnyside SS. 1954 Anne Isaac and Anne Neufeld (who has been there since the early 1950s) with their children.



Port Edward, B.C., CIM, and then WCCM, 1956 Jake and Elsie Bergen, with Paul, Marjorie, Cathy in arms.

Harvey Enns responded to the appeal, beginning in February 1951 by settling first at Hazelton and from there attempting to reach out to Burns Lake and Prince Rupert. In response to a further appeal from Anne Neufeld and Anne Isaac, teachers at Port Edward, Harvey Enns and his wife moved to the fishing village of Port Edward. Together with these teachers, particularly Anne Neufeld, they attempted to work among Japanese, Indians and Anglo-Saxons. When the Enns family left in September 1952 they were succeeded

by Jake and Elsie Bergen, who stayed for six years until this situation was transferred to the WCCM in 1958 as an administrative and financial responsibility. While there, they improved the amenities of the position by building a



Jake & Mary Geddert, 1955.
Christian teachers, Port Edward.

chapel and a residence. Jake and Mary Geddert, a teacher and nurse respectively, came to help in 1955-56. The work was difficult. Decisions for salvation as a result of persistent preaching, teaching, and application were not difficult to record, but ostracism was severe in both the Japanese and Indian groups. Besides, could the two be brought into one communion? It became obvious that as the Indians were brought into attendance the Japanese tended to disappear. The Indian question, with all of its cultural ramifications, was hardly understood or faced in this mission church era. It remained for a decade later to debate the problem and come to a decision about it. This will be dealt with in the provincial account.²⁹

German Culture and Converts

It was inevitable that out of the concern for special ethnic peoples would arise once more, in a more urgent form, the question of incorporation of converts into the Mennonite Brethren church. During the mission church era, this question was raised in every Conference jurisdiction. In fact, shortly after the first enunciation of the CIM as a possible Canadawide organization, about which B. B. Janz had been so enthusiastic, an underlying fear crept in, almost unnoticed. What should be done if there were converts? At a session of the NDC/TMK at MBBC on December 20, 1944, Janz was asked somewhat prematurely to write to all Mennonite Brethren workers *im Norden* (in the north) "to clarify questions of baptism and communion among Indians and to encourage steadfastness in the Mennonite Brethren way."³⁰

More to the point, Saskatchewan brethren had to give serious consideration to the development of churches by 1944. After all, the WCM was not fully their responsibility. In a white paper, so to speak, which was intended to obviate any further misunderstanding about the principles of the WCM,

H. A. Willems stated that converts on WCM fields should be directed to nearby believers' churches. Failing that, as long as the principle of self-determination was not violated, converts should be baptized and formed into "*Gemeinschaften*" (associations — a mission church, presumably). Eight years later, Willems prepared a "Constitution for Mission Churches Supported by the Mennonite Brethren Conference" in which mission church signified an "organized fellowship of believers meeting together at a specific locality."

In 1947, Manitoba had seemed theoretically prepared to take converts through a number of stages: baptism, the formation of a Mennonite Brethren mission station as in Saskatchewan, supervision and moulding by a home mission worker and board, progress toward independence, and eventually full membership in the Conference. Ontario agreed in 1952-53 that the whole purpose was to form "*biblische Gemeinden*" (biblical communities). While this goal seemed facile where a nucleus of Mennonite-born persons bolstered the membership, how did this apply to those of a different ethnicity and to those near Orillia, Ontario, who had seceded from the United Church of Canada and sought spiritual guidance from Henry Dick at Coldwater? Dick, of course, replied that this group of believers would have to conform to Mennonite Brethren polity and accept the confession of faith as their own.

Regardless of those specific examples, the question received a good airing in 1952, at least in correspondence between G. Penner at Herbert and Henry Regehr, Winnipeg, secretary of the Canadian Conference. Penner was one of those who did not want this kind of question to come to the conference floor (and it is not reported that it did!). Regehr as secretary, however, wrote him on November 13, stating his conviction that Mennonite Brethren everywhere should do all they could to retain all converts and nurture them. They should not be passed on to other denominations who might very well neglect them. On the other hand, Regehr acknowledged that "we cannot always recommend their incorporation into the nearest Mennonite Brethren congregation because of the language barrier."³¹

Perhaps the clearest definition of the question was prepared by the Alberta Conference in its so-called "Cornwall Constitution" of 1962. This was done with a group in mind, later called the Crooked Creek Mennonite Brethren Church. Alberta brethren there brought together "constitutional guidelines for the Mennonite Brethren Mission Church at Cornwall, Alberta." The guidelines clarified the question of identification, clearly defined membership according to Mennonite Brethren principles, stated the overall purposes of the church, laid out the responsibilities respecting Conference dues, projects, and spiritual standards, called for the new organization to come under the authority of a *Vorberat* (church council) and, failing that, the Alberta Committee of Reference and Counsel. Brought up at the same time was the matter of subsidies and the path to be taken to a position of self-reliance. The matter of bringing churches into full membership seemed unnecessarily complicated and was already an object of concern to many by the time this model was accepted. There were and would continue to be many examples of Mennonite Brethren lawyer-like concerns for correctness and legality.³²

V

SOME CANADAWIDE VOLUNTARIST ELEMENTS OF OUTREACH

Although each of the following forms of outreach activity came under the provincial jurisdiction, they were so widely adopted that it is possible to discuss them nationally rather than individually under each province. In the case of radio ministries, DVBS, and camping, there seems to have been a remarkable degree of emulation. Colonization evangelism was also a theme put forward but not widely practiced. But first we must discuss briefly the attempt to found a tract mission, because this preceded the "communications explosion." It was also the mission that succeeded least.

The Tract Society

About the same time that the Bethany Prayer Band was being launched at Hepburn, George W. Elliott began tract distribution in Langham, Saskatchewan. Though his Western Tract Mission (WTM) was not organized as such until 1941, it may very well be that Elliott's Langham outreach suggested to the WCM that it should do tracts also. Peter Ewert, one of the exponents in British Columbia of the WCM, organized a tract society in the South Abbotsford congregation in which Ernest Dyck, the future missionary to Quebec, was a leader. David Friesen of Greendale had a vision for making tract distribution a Canadawide avenue of service. The Committee of Reference and Counsel discussed the possibility in 1946 and asked H. S. Rempel to spearhead it.

The initiating impulse came from the fear that "English tract societies" [such as the WTM] were taking "our young people away" and this could have detrimental effects. The further step of writing a constitution for the Canadian scene was taken in 1947. In response, the Ontario Mennonite Brethren Tract Mission was organized in 1948-49, and various congregations such as the North End in Winnipeg became actively engaged in such activity. William Falk reported that the Manitoba group had up to thirty-three members, had purchased forty thousand tracts for distribution at home and abroad, and hoped to enlarge its scope.

But even as D. Edmond Hiebert in 1951 prepared an elaborate rationale for a tract ministry for the pages of the *Christian Leader*, it was evident that the project had fallen to the ground. The proposal was given to the publication committee, and there it seems to have expired. The question remaining is this: how many young people may have become discouraged from home mission outreach by this failure to follow through?¹

Radio and Mission

Most of the young people who might have been drawn into a tract mission were probably more easily convinced of the viability of airing the gospel message through the medium of radio, even though some tried to integrate a tract society with responses to radio broadcasts. There was the example of Theodore Epp's "Back to the Bible Broadcast," initiated in 1939. Evidently, the radio broadcast which engrossed a large listening audience among Mennonite

Brethren in the 1940s, and inspired them to use radio as a medium, was Charles Fuller's "Old Fashioned Revival Hour," emanating from Long Beach, California since 1925. That program, wrote Peter Klassen, "'made' our Sundays in those days [about 1947]. We never missed their half-hour of spirited singing and playing [Rudy Atwood then at the piano], followed by a half-hour sermon."² Klassen watched this phenomenon for many years and when he went on to teach music at MBBC he undoubtedly became the foremost analyst, reviewer and critic for church music in the Conference until about 1970.

The potential offered by radio was intriguing. Youth everywhere seemed eager to use that medium. They could stay at home, work in the church, and still utilize their generally good talents in music and singing. There was magic also in the new technology of microphones and record-cutting. It is ironic that in 1948 just as the *Sunday School Times* was asking, "What is Radio Doing to You?" and warning of the dangers of distraction, inconstancy, bias, demoralization, and other paralyses, the Mennonite Brethren had already decided to utilize the acknowledged power of the air waves.³

All of the radio programs discussed or listed here were ventures supported by societies or single congregations. That is to say, all were initially voluntarist in nature. It is not without significance that Saskatchewan's Northern District should lead the way. H. S. Rempel as city missionary began the program "Morning Devotions" in 1941, and the WCM under Frank Froese offered "Living Waters," beginning



Western Childrens' Mission Broadcast (1943-4)
Seated: Frank Froese, director, Daniel Wirsche, speaker.
Singers: Mr. and Mrs. H. G. Rempel, and Betty Schultz, right.

May 7, 1944. Next came the program that has expanded into a sophisticated operation and has been adopted as the radio arm of the Manitoba Conference. In 1946 Henry Brucks and other MBBC students launched the "Gospel Light Hour" in



Henry Brucks, 1947
Founder of the Gospel Light Hour, with Henry Poetker.
An originator of the Tent Mission.
Missionary in Zaire (Belgian Congo, 1949-60)

seems to have been overpowering. Much more research must be done to explain this communication explosion and why it died away in the 1960s.⁴

Characteristic of many of the radio broadcasts was the dominance of the male quartet. Among those who made their mark and served for many years were: Frasersview's "Crusaders," in which Henry and Arthur Block were leaders; the King's Four, which featured the Klassen brothers; and Moments of Blessing, broadcast from Virgil in which the other Block brothers, the sons of Abram Block, figured prominently. This last group has sung together for the longest time. They went full-time as "The Gospel Messengers" and served with Rudy Boschman when he was Conference evangelist in the 1970s.

The longest-lasting service has been performed by those programs designed for shut-ins and the elderly, particularly those in the German language. Five of these were aired, as the list indicates.

In the midst of this phenomenal growth of interest in broadcasting the gospel, a small group of Mennonite businessmen launched a radio station at Altona with the call letters CFAM. It went on the air in March 1957 as a "Farm and Good Music" station and eventually developed as Radio Southern Manitoba. Taking into account the "economic, aesthetic, and the spiritual needs of the community," as many other programs listed here could not do, Radio Southern Manitoba decided on twenty hours of religious broadcasting per week, including the releases of the expanding Gospel Light Hour.⁵

The Gospel Light Hour

In 1954 the Gospel Light Hour became the radio voice of the Manitoba Conference. Though it had its own broadcasting

Winnipeg. Their story becomes a significant part of outreach at home and abroad. There followed in rapid succession, almost within a decade, eighteen more radio broadcasts,* including CFAM, which merits inclusion. The emulative factor

Date of Origin	Title	Sponsor	Director
1) 1941	Morning Devotions/Gospel Tidings	Saskatoon City Mission	A. Ediger
2) 1942	Living Waters	WCM, Hepburn, in summer months	Ben Kroeker, F. F. Froese
3) 1946-47	Gospel Light Hour	"Faith Group" MBBC	Henry Brucks, Henry Poetker
4) 1947	The Gospel Hour	Greendale Church	David Friesen
5) 1948	The Gospel Hour	East Chilliwack Church	William Thiessen
6) 1949	Moments of Blessings	Virgil Church	C. M. Penner, Herman Kroeker
7) 1950		Herbert Bible School	Henry Voth
8) 1951	The Glorious Gospel	St. Catharines Church	Henry Petkau
9) 1951	<i>Sonntag Morgen Gottesdienst</i>	Yarrow Church	H. P. Neufeldt, Reimer family
10) 1952	Lighthouse of Hope	Fraserview Church	H. G. Classen
11) 1952-54		MBBS, Clearbrook	Leslie Stobbe, J. H. Friesen
12) 1952	Gospel Bells	Coaldale Church	A. P. Regier
13) 1952	Morning Manna/Gospel Echoes	BBS, Hepburn	J. K. Schroeder
14) 1953		Matsqui Church	A. H. Wieler
15) 1954	The Chapel Speaks	Hampshire Christian Fellowship	H. H. Dick, John B. Epp
16) 1955		Kitchener Church	
17) 1955	<i>Heimatlicht</i>	Leamington Church	Ben Neufeld, Isaak Tiessen
18) 1955	<i>Wort des Lebens</i>	Virgil Church	Rudy Bartel, Henry Goerzen
19) 1957	Farm and Good Music <i>CFAM</i>	Mennonite Business Men	Dennis Barkman
20) 1962	<i>Stimme des Evangeliums</i>	South Abbotsford	C. D. Toews
21) 1962	"Paroles de Vie"	Canada Youth Committee	Ernest Dyck

studio by 1960 and was widely used, it had not yet received Canadawide acceptance. In fact, many of the broadcasts listed above were still receiving local support. The Gospel Light Hour was presented to the Manitoba Conference as "a work of faith," initiated by Henry Brucks and Henry Poetker, then carried forward by P. R. Toews and Henry Born.

Brucks and Poetker had \$1.98 between them when they were looking at costs of \$3,000 a year. They tried, at first unsuccessfully, to get the blessing of the College president, J. B. Toews. He and his faculty said that the time was not right. Too many other considerations in the life of a new institution seemed at stake. Toews went so far as to tell Brucks, "This is not the will of God!" Brucks and Poetker, finding this pronouncement too arrogant, decided to challenge the president by threatening to leave MBBC. Why should they stay if they could not test their faith within the context of the school's program of practical home missions? Toews fortunately came around to granting his blessing, and in 1947 the Gospel Light Hour went ahead. Though it was a "faith work" from the beginning, this is not to suggest that the GLH was not looking for a sponsor. Overtures were made to the Manitoba Conference as early as 1949.⁶

When John M. Schmidt became the radio preacher and director in 1950, the Gospel Light Hour added more stations and programs, in German, English and Russian. The German-language "Licht des Evangeliums" was instituted in 1956 with Henry Regehr as speaker. A year later the equivalent in Russian brought D. B. Wiens into the broadcasting picture. As he said, he had benefitted from all those years of speaking Russian at Arelee and Blaine Lake. In 1959 J. J. Neufeld began to broadcast in Low German. The GLH soon required studios and offices to encompass the equipment, manpower, and choirs that such an operation involved. The required plant was provided by the Manitoba Conference in 1960. In that year Schmidt could praise God: "The completion of the Gospel Light studios is the fulfillment of the faith expressed by Henry Brucks and Henry Poetker 14 years ago



Gospel Light Hour Quartet, mid fifties
Victor Martens, Henry Braun, Rudy Boschman, Lawrence Warkentin, Bertha Pauls at the piano.

in the [MBBC] dormitory [Ebenezer]. A work started by two has grown into a complex broadcasting system involving some 80 people. The studio, the choir, the quartet, and the various speakers all have been God-given." Some of the



Quartet during John Schmidt's direction, 1960s.
John Klassen, Len Schroeder, Frank Funk, George Olfert.

conference's best-known singers and musicians have served as soloists, in quartets and choirs. Famous among quartets are the "King's Four" with Ted Epp, Abe Neufeld, Henry Born and Herb Jantzen; then the quartet consisting of Victor Martens, Henry Braun, Rudy Boschman, and Lawrence Warkentin; and the longest serving foursome of John



GLH Choir, mid fifties.
Front: Helen Willms (Litz), Mary Kroeker (Willms), Mary Unger (Regehr), Adeline Willems, Marian Jantzen, Margaret Schultz at piano.
Middle: Erica Dyck, Elizabeth Dirks, Cornelius Balzer, Agnes Roesler, Betty Guenther.
Back: John Klassen, William Martens, Peter Martens, Ernie Pauls, Jake Bergman.

Klassen, Len Schroeder, Frank Funk, and George Olfert. Choirs for three languages could only be found in a cosmopolitan city like Winnipeg. There was also the children's choir led by Frieda Duerksen. By 1961 John Schmidt could give a satisfactory accounting regarding financial support and success in terms of fruitfulness as shown by the responses.⁷

Music and Mission

Only rarely was music-making related directly to

outreach, except in radio broadcasting. Yet one of the strongest emphases in youth work at this time was *Gesangessache*, which, as we have pointed out in connection with the career of Ben Horch, was a vital part of the innermost mission. This program sought to prepare directors to foster and elevate choir work in the churches to the praise of God. C. D. Toews, who brought his MEI and church choirs to almost an elitist quality of sound, promoted the potential for "service of song in our outreach" whether on Vancouver streets, in WCCM gospel halls, in prison ministries, or in radio broadcasts. "Thousands," he rejoiced, "could be revived and comforted" through the kinds of spiritual and esthetically pleasing songs he and others had fostered. It had long been known that "poor quality music drives some away" and that high quality singing had become a source of attraction to Mennonite Brethren churches. All of this engendered a considerable debate between those who detected and deplored the search for elitism in song, and those who were anxious to use music in evangelism without diminishing quality. Helmut Janzen referred to this polarity when he asked, "Have the Mennonites made a name for themselves through music or is Christ being presented to a lost world?" But in spite of the controversy, the potential for mission was well exercised in 1960 when 69 senior and 19 junior choirs, enrolling 2,661 singers, served the Canadian Conference. In addition, there were 921 members in other choirs. In all, 26 choral workshops had been conducted in 1960.⁸

Colonization Evangelism

Though colonization evangelism received enough attention in the 1950s to take on a missiological slant, very few sufficiently large groups voluntarily transplanted themselves physically and occupationally for the express purpose of evangelizing in a new area. While this could have been the answer for many areas, Frank H. Epp found, when doing research for his series entitled "The True North" in 1973, that many Mennonite Brethren "colonizers" in remote areas were possessed of a dissenting streak and ultimately did nothing to prevent WCCM churches from joining non-Mennonite denominations. But because teachers are considered mobile, some pressure was placed on Christians in that most popular Mennonite profession to take the gospel witness into remote areas.

This was an echo of the challenge given by the CSSM in 1928 in Manitoba. As we have seen, many teachers helped children prepare for CSSM summer camps, and had been lighting candles of Christian witness and literary skills in districts not well served. In a sense, mission churches followed in places like Port Edward, Kitimat, Terrace, Hazelton, Prince George, Fort St. John, and Dawson Creek, when teachers and others took vacancies in school districts. Abe Konrad of Matsqui (now Edmonton) wrote in 1955 of the many trained teachers who were going "where no one else will go." When he asked Abe J. and Elizabeth (Suderman) Klassen why they would go north with two children in 1954, their answer was that they had "an inner compulsion to serve the Lord in a special way." Konrad believed it was, as theorized in the introduction of this account, the "love of Christ constraining" that sent them. He ended with a challenge: "Are there any more teachers, nurses, and mission workers to join this glorious band?"⁹

There were many more, but it was mainly in British Columbia and Newfoundland, at opposite ends of the country, that they received media attention. With respect to British Columbia, mention has been made of those who responded to Sukkau's call in 1949-50. In Terrace, Andrew Toews held the position of vice-principal of the high school for many years, while he and his family fellowshiped in the Terrace group. The young church in Hazelton depended on assistance from Christian teachers working in Indian schools. Among the teachers who helped the Calvin Buehlers at Vanderhoof were Abe and Elizabeth Klassen, the Neil Klassens, and Rudie Willms who worked in home missions later. Bill and Betty Voth helped to begin the work in Prince George. Jake and Leona Friesen quite deliberately



"Colonization Evangelism"
Jake & Leona Friesen, with Grace (1958).

tried to form a group of committed persons to go to the Peace River in the late 1950s. The plan fell through only when Jake's placement in social services was diverted to Terrace. This, however, did not prevent others from going to Dawson Creek and Fort St. John on the Peace River. Responses to the call from the Mennonite Central Committee for teachers and nurses to work in Newfoundland as Volunteer Service workers will be treated in connection with the survey of the Atlantic provinces.¹⁰

Urbanization Instead

Instead of colonization evangelism taking hold across the country, the much stronger tendency was for teachers and other professionals to gravitate to large urban centers like Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, Winnipeg, and St. Catharines. Concomitant with urbanization came suburbanization. Instead of planting churches in the inner core among the disadvantaged where they bought cheap houses at first, they tended to build new, larger, ever more versatile churches in the new and expensive suburbs where they all wished to live. Many families transplanted themselves at least twice, if not three times, in one lifetime. This same suburbanization has been keenly felt in the most recent decades. For example, the Brooklands Church in Greater Winnipeg, where Abe Quiring worked for many years, had all the modern church planting techniques, but converts tended to move to better suburbs once their lives were stabilized. Today, of course, this phenomenon is not seen as

objectionable because Mennonite Brethren tend to work among the equally affluent, and the Brooklands as newstarts tend to be skirted.¹¹

Daily Vacation Bible School

Another manifestation common to all provinces was Daily Vacation Bible School (DVBS). *Die Sommerbibelschularbeit*, as it was known in yearly reports, was the precursor of the mission Sunday school. It was hoped this would develop into a mission station, then become a mission church and, finally in some cases, become a Mennonite Brethren church. DVBS was simply part of the common wisdom in the decades before church growth missiology caught on. For example, John Unger made the sweeping assertion in 1964 that since the birth of the Sunday school (in the late eighteenth century) no movement had been "so intensely practical and so significantly successful." Organized in the United States as a national association in 1911, DVBS was initiated among Mennonite Brethren in Canada by Bethany and Winkler Bible Schools in 1933. Both schools were influenced by the example of the Canadian Sunday School Mission.¹²

During the 1950s, it was a maxim among provincial field directors that DVBS and its concomitants were "the very best way" of reaching children. Children were accessible,



Oliver DVBS, B. C. (1950s)
Tena Isaac on the right with a group of children.
(Mrs. Rudy H. Wiebe).

susceptible to the gospel, and malleable. The mission to children, as recalled by Henry Warkentin, "awakened unprecedented interest and missionary zeal," and became "the first organized expression of missionary vision and zeal." What else could a small immigrant minority such as the *Russlaender* in British Columbia given the vast cultural differences and problems do during the depression? Because unemployment was high, Warkentin recalled, "manpower was no problem." Besides, DVBS "offered a welcome diversion from the hum-drum life of these children on the farm. Our churches . . . could hardly venture into evangelism of adults," unless of course among Russian and German-speaking people. "To teach and evangelize children was least demanding and threatening," especially when the sponsoring churches, during the war, still "spoke the enemy's language." Also, there was the "simplicity of approach" and the objects of it all, the children, were not very demanding in the decade before television.

This voluntarism and enthusiasm attracted attention and, again, as recalled by Henry Brucks, created the need for Bible schools, as shown by the expansion of societal schools in East Chilliwack, South Abbotsford, and Ontario. DVBS became part of the WCM in British Columbia (WCCM) in 1939. Ontario young people went out first in 1944 and found support. Manitoba adopted DVBS as part of their official outreach about the same time, and Alberta brethren began a children's mission in 1945. In Saskatchewan, of course, work among children was part and parcel of the WCM. There, church planting and DVBS were more integrated from the beginning.¹³

From small beginnings that engendered much enthusiasm in the 1930s and 1940s, DVBS peaked between 1957 and 1965. Across Canada, in 1957, about 300 teachers enrolled 7,300 children and recorded upwards of 200 decisions. Ontario,



Toronto, July 1963.

DVBS, organized provincially by John Boldt.

Teachers: —, —, Eunice Warkentin, —, —, Cathy Reimer, Justina Penner, John Boldt.

under Jake Neufeld's direction in the mid-sixties, was able to recruit as many teachers as J. H. Friesen in British Columbia from a much larger constituency. Even with the equivalent of about 340 teachers at work, they never reached the 10,000 mark in any given year and the results in terms of conversion were no greater than in 1957.

Not that the cost was high. Using Ontario as an example, that Conference spent \$27,575 to reach 23,327 children between 1944 and 1963. The cost, at the Conference level, for two decades, was one dollar per child. The 1,701 teachers who served in that period were volunteers (women outnumbering men three to one). More than half of these teachers had Bible school training and also taught Sunday school. The results were 489 decisions in those 18 years, or 27 annually.¹⁴

The big question raised about DVBS was this: what happened to the converts? How many churches developed from this work? How many were passed on to other hands or perhaps neglected entirely, as Regehr feared in 1952. Some of these questions will have to be answered in a discussion of the various stations and in the general summary of Part Two.

It is easy to be critical in retrospect. We are, however, more concerned with what responsible people thought at the time. As early as 1961, Jake Friesen, field director in British Columbia thought DVBS was "at the crossroads." The results simply could not be squared with the great outlay of money and working hours. Even more to the point, in Alberta, John Dyck stated in 1966 that after nearly

twenty-five years of children's work, they had not established one permanent mission. Moreover, other provinces, especially British Columbia and Manitoba, were experiencing a disquieting number of closures of mission churches. A better way had to be found. Various brethren thought they had found a new model in church planting. The application of this model forms a later part of this story.¹⁵

Camping

Commenting on the development of camping in Saskatchewan, Henry Willems stated that after the war two factors decelerated children's work through DVBS: one was the elimination of the country schoolhouse through the educational policy of consolidation; the other was the great loss of teachers through migration elsewhere. These changes encouraged small town urbanization. In Saskatchewan, they also led to the development of camps, where the equivalent number of children might be brought together in a more appealing setting. Generally speaking, DVBS decelerated as camping accelerated. Camping in many ways, once it was underway, usurped the personnel and dollars once devoted to DVBS.¹⁶

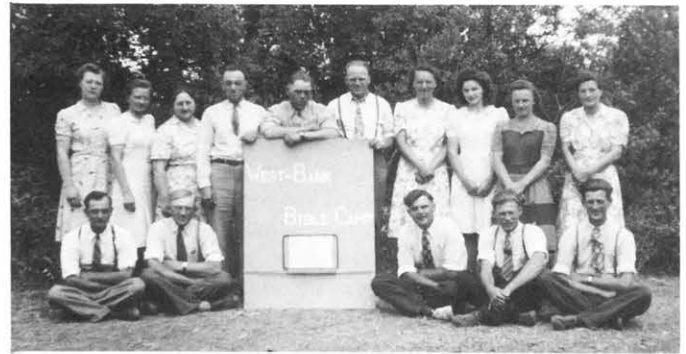
But Saskatchewan was not first in the Mennonite Brethren field of camping. Winkler Bible School, having begun a DVBS in 1933, and having found that many children from Mennonite Brethren families were going off to the CSSM camp, cherished the idea of developing a camp near Winkler. In lieu of having their own property, they rented the Gimli camp of the CSSM for several early summer weeks each year, beginning in the late thirties. Even A. H. Unruh and John G. Wiens taught in a camp that had essentially a "teacher training format." A. A. Kroeker served as manager. The overhead was kept low because Kroeker, already a well-to-do farmer, brought farm produce and a cook from Winkler. It was in 1939 that Kroeker stumbled onto the piece of property that later became famous as Camp Arnes. But first we must turn to Saskatchewan, where H. M. Willems was active.¹⁷

As stated, at the end of the war, the WCM began to consolidate children's work into a camping program. The first campsite used in 1944 was known as Sand Beach Camp. Not much is known about the camp except that the road to it was often well-nigh impassable and that in 1952 the government wanted the area for grazing land. But where could they go?

John F. Froese and Nick Willems found property sixty miles away on Redberry Lake. The big move was made in June and July of 1952. After clocking up six thousand miles and sixteen hundred working hours, plus many more for the construction of a tabernacle and cabins, Redberry was ready for the dedication service on July 19, 1952. D. B. Wiens, J. S. Adrian, and H. S. Rempel were guests. On that day, the Petrofka ferry carried nearly three hundred vehicles across the North Saskatchewan River. It was a great day in the history of the WCM.

The southern branch did not lag far behind the northern. The first site near Swift Current was opened in 1946. Rudolph Wirsche managed the camp, and E. J. Lautermilch directed the program while his wife and Emma Buller did the cooking. Two years later, Eugene Martens donated a "lovely site" nearby, on the west bank of the South

Saskatchewan River, hence the name West Bank Bible Camp. Seventy-two children came. Eleanor Neufeld reflected on the benefits of such a camping experience in a



West Bank Bible Camp, South Sask. (1946). WCM.
Seated: Henry Braun, ——— Loewen, George Driedger, Jake Wiebe, John Unger.
Standing: Emma Buller, Mrs. and Mr. Ed Lautermilch, Rudolph Wirsche leaning on the sign, director.

long poem. The last two stanzas are quoted here:

What greater joy could then be ours
As servants of our God,
Than point such seeking souls to Christ
Who makes them sons of God.

With hearts of praise and gratitude
For such a day at camp,
We go to bed with prayers of thanks
For West Bank Bible Camp.¹⁸

West Bank and Redberry Camps became the property of the Southern and Northern districts of the Saskatchewan Conference respectively, and continued to serve children with an expanding program. The purpose, as expressed by Lorlie Barkman when he was a pastor in Moose Jaw, was to "evangelize, help Christians grow, and minister to the needs of the campers."¹⁹



Lake Winnipeg Mission Camp, Arnes, Manitoba (1953).
The staff of 1953: the Peter Penners, second and third from the left, and the Abe Quirings on the right.

Turning to Manitoba, we now take up the story of Kroeker's discovery and purchase of the Lake Winnipeg Mission Camp property at Arnes, on Lake Winnipeg, north of Gimli. An Icelander named Tergeson told Kroeker in 1939 that "I hef a vunderful place. It is on the lake, and for dat purpose

[a Christian children's camp] I would sell it." The asking price for 160 acres of choice lake property was one thousand dollars. Ten brethren from Winkler, Morden, and Winnipeg each contributed one hundred dollars to purchase this site.

Strangely, however, the camp was not launched for another ten years. The war's intervention and the distance to the property had dimmed the first vision. A new group, among them David E. Redekop from the South End church, was thinking of starting a camp elsewhere. But after discussing the matter with Kroeker and others, they agreed to use the Lake Winnipeg site. They were able to purchase the 160 acres in 1949 at the original price. After much beelike activity in the preparation of that site, it was dedicated as a mission camp on May 29, 1949. Alfred Kroeker directed the first camp of 122 children that year.



Arnes, 1958.
H. R. Baerg, director, with his staff.

To continue fostering an expanded ministry, a decision was made to engage a fulltime camp director. In 1961 David Loewen was chosen as director. He is the son of Peter D. Loewen of Yarrow, whom we have seen as a missionary-minded student at the WBS. An appealing feature was the early decision to have an annual camp of one week's duration for those children who could not pay.²⁰

The other Manitoba camp organized in 1949 was at Burwalde, known as the Winkler Bible Camp. It was a project of the WBS, as DVBS had been sixteen years earlier. The scouts — H. H. Redekopp and G. D. Pries — found the camp site only seven miles from Winkler. Burwalde had been the site of the first Winkler Mennonite Brethren church in the 1880s. It provided an advantageous site for children in the Winkler area. Hastily erected buildings were dedicated there on July 10, 1949, and H. S. Voth and John G. Wiens were the speakers on that occasion. John Boldt, a teacher at WBS, served as camp director from 1951 to 1959. In 1968, James Nikkel, as director, reported that the Winkler Bible Camp had as many Mennonites from other conferences in attendance as Mennonite Brethren, and 20 percent of the children came from non-Mennonite homes.²¹

Though some Ontario brethren dreamed of having a campsite somewhat distant from the relatively hot climate of southern Ontario, they did not buy one as a conference until the end of the 1970s. Instead, they utilized the campus

of Eden Christian College, beginning in 1953. Though the campus is not on Lake Ontario, a beach was found nearby where the 130 children could be taken by truck on appropriate afternoons. Directed at first by Herman Kroeker, and later, for many years, by C. Alfred Friesen, this camp carried on until the end of the sixties.²²



Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario (late 1950s).
Eden Childrens' Camp, with C. Alfred Friesen as leader, on campus of Eden Christian College.

The two most westerly provinces saw brethren move in the direction of camping during the mid fifties. Both Conferences suggested that study committees prepare a rationale for the development of camps. British Columbia brethren put forward the following points: our children are going elsewhere; we



Columbia Bible Camp, 1961.
Prayer Meeting of WCCM camping staff, led by N. J. Dyck.
Front: Tom Loewen, _____, _____.
Back: _____, Peter Ewert (Mission), _____, Jake Neufeld, _____.

should provide for our own; the rate of conversions is higher at camp than in other programs; and a camp program would have a wholesome influence on attendance in our mission churches, and a variegated program will meet many needs. Thereupon, the Mennonite Brethren Camp Society of British Columbia purchased a forty-acre campsite above the enchanting Cultus Lake for \$15,000. In 1959, Nick Dyck, then of McConnell Creek, conducted the first three camps for the WCCM. Five pastors from mission churches and John Reimer, the director formed the supervisory committee. This camp was named Columbia Bible Camp.²³

Alberta began with camping on a rental basis in 1956 by conducting a "Southern Alberta Youth Camp." Invited was John M. Schmidt of the Gospel Light Hour, who spoke on "the Mission Field About Us." At the same time, the Conference

debated the camp question. A study had been made of what other provinces were doing. Seen positively, camps could in fact consolidate DVBS work, as had become necessary in Saskatchewan. Moreover, there was a felt need for a camp "for our own children." Seen negatively, camps would drain off the DVBS workers, would likely reduce the numbers reached, and those reached would likely not be "mission children." "Where we now reach up to 800 with DVBS, we will likely reach between 100 and 200." The outcome of these for and against arguments presented by Bernard Sawatsky was that the Conference voted for a new camp committee. Two years later, Abe Regier reported that 176 children had been served at the Southern Alberta Bible Camp, and that they intended to repeat the program. By slow degrees, Alberta edged toward a large undertaking named Camp Evergreen in 1962.²⁴

One may say that all of these camps began under societal supervision, though the Winkler Bible Camp was owned by the Manitoba Conference and the WCM camps by the Saskatchewan Districts. Nevertheless, all were staffed by Mennonite Brethren personnel and all coordinated their programs with provincial outreach. That is to say, all were at first mission-oriented as befitted this mission church era. This applied particularly to Arnes, the WCM camps, and Columbia. In the late sixties and early seventies there was a shift in many of them to provide programs that reinforced what we have called the innermost mission of the Conference.



Camping Come of Age, Arnes 20 Years After.
Dave Loewen and George Whipple, at Bellingham Firs, Washington, 1969, at camping conference, where Loewen's contribution is recognized.

Camps became supplementary to the educational program of the congregations. Though most people have seen nothing wrong with this trend, it is centripetal (inward-working) rather than centrifugal (outward-reaching).

Camp Arnes is one exception to this trend. Though it has kept its societal independence, it has always been identified with the Mennonite Brethren churches of Manitoba. It has retained its outreach dynamic to a remarkable degree. Whereas in 1967, 85 percent of the enrollment was Mennonite Brethren, five years later it was 33 percent Catholic and 22 percent non-church. In the early 1970s an average of eighty campers per year were making decisions for Christ. The program was essentially recreational, but it did not neglect the spiritual. Its continuing attempt is to "establish creative relationships" between counselors and campers, to "encounter the beauties of God's marvelous creation and to experience the exhilaration of adventure." Dave Loewen's philosophy has been to "reach the child by winning him as a person," and in order to do that he must "tie in with something that excites the child on natural grounds, such as recreation." Loewen explained his approach in 1973:

So we have chosen the skills approach. The kids can discover themselves, discover their surroundings and experience success, achievement, growth. The counselor is leading them in this adventure, this discovery. This builds a strong relationship, and where you have this strong relationship the kids will eat out of your hand. Then you can begin to work on personality development, on building wholesome character. . . . It's a soft-sell approach — rather than a hard evangelistic approach — through normal channels in a living-together situation.

We always tell the churches not to copy our program, and we try not to copy theirs. We're not set up to communicate the way the church does. Ours is a domestic setting, and we have to use that as our strength.

We want to complement the work of the church, not duplicate it. The church has a knowledge aim, the camp has an inspirational aim. The camp builds on what the church puts out.²⁵

VI

THE MISSION CHURCH ERA IN THE PROVINCES

A. Manitoba

Manitoba brethren began their mission church period with such structures as they had inherited from the *BK* and *NDC*. Because of his many leadership positions, H. S. Voth helped to bring Manitoba into the vanguard of development and change, particularly in the conceptualization of the *CIM*. But though some of the early home mission stations, such as Winnipegosis and Ashern in the north, flew the banner of the *CIM*, there were as many in the south — Carman, Horndean, and Brandon, — who called themselves Gospel Light churches.

Even closer to reality, however, was the simple fact that the *Randmission*, *Zeltmission*, and *Doerfermission* (work on the rimland, in tents, in Mennonite villages), not to mention the innermost (congregational) mission, *all* reported through the Home Missions Committee and received their remuneration from its treasurer G. W. Pries. DVBS was of course run by the WBS. Until 1955, the city mission carried on as a separate entity, had its own committee, and reported separately on the two aspects of its concern: the work directed by William Falk, to be detailed later, and the Mary-Martha Home, which continued until about 1959.¹

Randmission

It appears that the term *Randmission*, used in British Columbia and Manitoba since about 1940, had to be defined repeatedly. It was the work among the scattered, on the rimland of established communities. C. C. DeFehr in 1943



Elizabeth & C. A. DeFehr c. 1950.

thought it included the “unchurched among our people.” His father, C. A. DeFehr put it quite simply in terms of a new frontier under the *CIM* banner: “*die erweiterte Mission im*

Inland” (the extended mission at home). All told, *Randmission* meant a new mobilization of forces: full-time workers, financial support, and the summer integration of DVBS and the tent mission with the ongoing field operation.²

Structures and Status

As implied, leadership revolved around two committees, each comprising nine brethren. A. A. Kroeker was the acknowledged leader of the rural mission while A. H. Redekopp, Peter W. Martens, and J. J. Neufeld served intermittently as “field men.” Martens always also did colporteur work. Kroeker’s counterpart in the urban committee was H. P. Toews who, in the city mission controversy during Hiebert’s time, had favored separating mission from church. C. A. DeFehr served as long-time treasurer while he and his wife, Elizabeth, consistently supported Anna Thiessen and her home for girls. Just about the time the decentralizing crunch came from the *BK* in 1954, Manitoba’s rural mission came under the leadership of J. H. Quiring who was the pastor at Winkler. Comparisons were readily drawn with Saskatchewan and British Columbia where one committee supervised both rural and urban outreach. Accordingly, in 1956, a constitutional amendment was brought forward to merge the two committees. A new committee of nine would henceforth superintend and develop all aspects of home missions in the province, including the opening and closing of stations, and the appointment and leave-taking of personnel. This was accepted, and in 1957 Quiring reported for one committee. The Conference adopted an article constituting a coordinating committee made up essentially of something equivalent to the old Home Missions Committee.³



J. H. Quiring speaking at Lindal Baptism on the bank of Pembina river, 14 July 1957.

Quiring continued his vigorous leadership, introducing such policies as indigenization and a clarification of membership status for those not baptized by immersion. In 1958 he recommended that support be reduced by 20 percent annually, with consideration given to circumstances, so that a mission group should become self-supporting within five years. At the same time, he was working to clarify the status

of affiliate members should a charter organization take place. He was concerned about non-immersed members coming in by transfer or marriage.

Rather rigorous conditions were set for such memberships. They should be open to further teaching on baptism and should certainly not undermine the authority of the church's position on baptism; they would be barred from being delegates to Conferences and from becoming ordained to the ministry; and transfer of such memberships by certificate should be a local matter. In order, however, to enhance the status of congregations formed on a mission field under supervision, Quiring recommended in 1961 that they no longer be called "mission stations" but rather "*Gemeinden*" (that is, churches). He thought churches were easier to bring along to full responsibility than those kept at an intermediate status. Though the stringent membership rules of 1959 would not be erased, all new converts and transfers should be brought into a church, not a mission.

That move was immediately declared unconstitutional and at a special conference on February 10, 1962, of the Committee of Reference and Counsel, the Home Missions Committee, and the workers the work was thrown back to the 1959 position respecting status. The crux of the matter was formal incorporation as a church. This could only take place in conjunction with the committee or a nearby Mennonite Brethren church. It was simply wrong for a certificate of membership to be held by a mission church before it was duly constituted a church.⁴



Manitoba Home Mission Workers (1958)
Frank Peters, Ben Doerksen, Frank Friesen Jr., Abe Quiring, Lawrence Warkentin, Peter Martens.

Lindal

In a sense, Manitoba's *Randmission* began with Lindal, and not Winnipegosis, though it was the occupation of the latter field that occasioned the latest clarification of the term. Jake H. Kehler, a Winkler graduate, soon felt that Lindal's supposed status as a Mennonite Brethren church under the supervision of the Home Missions Committee and J. P. Braun of Morden was causing identity problems. Hence, he recommended in 1947 that Lindal be classed as a mission station,

and that he should be fully remunerated in order to devote his whole time to the pastoral and missionary role. This was done, and when the Kehlers hosted the tenth anniversary of the founding of the church, their guests included the evangelists of the 1934-36 period, David Forsyth and Peter Esau, many friends from Morden and Winkler, as well as many people from the 1-6, as the district was popularly called.⁵

The Kehlers were followed in fairly rapid succession by more "professional" leadership, so to speak. Kehler wanted his successor to be more apt with young people. Abe Goerz, who had served in the tent mission during his years as an MBBC student, came in 1949. He was an artistic man of many talents. He preached earnestly, organized youth rallies, called able evangelists, taught DVBS, and tried to enhance the ministry of music in the congregation. He traveled with a youth group, presenting programs in song and testimony. Because converts of evangelist Olaf Erikson requested Bible Studies he also began an outreach in Darlingford. During the time of Abe and Helen Goerz, as a matter of interest, electrification came to the district.



Lindal, Manitoba, 1955.
Wilmer and Evangeline Kornelson, leaving Lindal, with their two children.

The Goerzes were succeeded in 1952 by Wilmer and Evangeline Kornelson. Their ministry was characterized by an attempt at consolidation. Kornelson brought the congregation face to face with Mennonite Brethren polity, including the exercise of church discipline and the application of the church mission model to Lindal. This resulted in a decrease in the membership, as only eighteen accepted the new situation. The change confirmed a return to mission church status under the umbrella of the CIM. Meanwhile, Kornelson initiated another extension to Lindal at distant Snowflake, south of Manitou.

The third and last MBBC graduate to serve Lindal was Peter Penner. Though there were some hopes of growth after twenty-one years at Lindal, the reality seemed to be a somewhat static membership. Helping in the church were Peter and Eva Loewen who taught at the Lindal school



Lindal, Manitoba (1956).
"Four Rooms and a Path!" and the makings for an igloo. The author trying to cope with 90 inches of snow.

(before consolidation in Manitoba). Snow was a constant factor. The winter of 1956-57 brought ninety inches, making the roads impassable for months. Kind neighbors with horses kept the Penners supplied with milk and meat. Peter and Justina Penner introduced the game Scrabble to the Harry Guderian family and were often embarrassed to be outscored by the enterprising farmer. Before the Penners left, they had the joy of baptizing seven candidates with such names as Brown, Guderian, and Rachul.⁶

Following the departure of the Penners for a Bible teaching assignment in British Columbia, Lindal returned to ministry by "remote control," from Morden. As the committee now leaned toward self-support, Quiring offered Lindal the preaching ministry of Frank Friesen, Jr. He suffered the embarrassment of having Lindal request that Morden's Alliance church should serve their needs. This was refused. Then, when it was clear that the group no longer wanted Mennonite leadership, they were in fact given the leadership of Joe and Marie Wiebe who took up residence in Morden. Despite the buildup of feelings, this proved to be a mutually satisfactory arrangement. The very brother who was excommunicated, around 1952, was now (1959) in the moderator's chair to induct Joe and Marie into membership in a pastoral role. Twelve former members came back! If anyone could relate to Lindal folk, it would be Joe and Marie Wiebe. Wiebe revived interest remarkably and expanded the work at Snowflake. With this gift for the personal touch and the ability to communicate, in English or Low German, the Wiebes touched many lives redemptively.

Nevertheless, the windup service came on June 19, 1966. Joe Wiebe was not in good health at that time, and urbanization, retirements to Morden, and the general mobility of members brought the work to a close. Despite

the sadness evoked by such an event, the day was "filled with peace and thanksgiving, gladness and sadness, as many attended the final service at Lindal. . . . Only God knows how many the church has witnessed to, won, and nurtured in the community. Their witness has extended to the foreign fields," for example through the talents of Ronald Guderian, a trained Wycliffe linguist. Harry, the father, had wished they could continue by having "an evangelical man [not necessarily Mennonite Brethren] who had committed himself to obedience to the Word of God and had pledged himself to preaching without qualifying its authority." This statement made to Harold Jantz said it all. The hangups about the Mennonite Brethren structures and seeming strictures in the background could not be overcome.⁷



Christian Teachers Providing "Church," near Ashern 1933.
Abram P. and Justina Janzen gathering a group of German speakers to the teacherage for Bible study and singing, A. P. Janzen is on extreme left & Justina 4th person from the right.

Ashern

Lying above the fifty-first parallel in the Manitoba "Interlake Region," Ashern was early filled by many German speaking people, just the kind of families considered "*Zerstreuten unsres Volkes*" (the scattered among our people): the object of *Randmission*. These became the concern of the North End Church, and C. N. Hiebert and his assistant, H.S. Rempel preached there as a result. There were also teaching families like the A. P. Janzens who settled in Camper, a village south of Ashern, in 1913, and utilized the teacherage as a place of worship for German-speaking families in the neighborhood. Together with other teachers, they conducted Bible studies and taught Christian songs.⁸



Randmission
Ashern — on tour — Male Quartet (1946).
Peter Esau, Corny Balzer, Abe Sawatsky, Bill Thiessen.

Peter J. Esau was the first Bible school and MBBC graduate to take up residence at Ashern in 1945. He served in two locations and taught religious education classes in the schools. He also tried to minister to Russian-speaking people as he had done a decade earlier in the Lindal district. After one year, however, the Esaus accepted a call to serve in Ontario. This vacancy was filled by Joe and Marie Wiebe who had gained much experience at Stuartburn, southeast of Steinbach.



**The Joe and Marie Wiebe Mission (c. 1950).
“Doing Personal Work,” what they did best!
Marie moving the church from Marne to Ashern!**

Beginning in the Marne school, they stayed in the Ashern area for eleven years, serving also in the distant Clarkleigh. Their remarkable ministry of personal work largely among non-Mennonites, their ability to build up a physical plant with modest means, their sacrifices, and their observed success at integrating a growing family of five children in the work, marked them early for recognition in an anecdotal biography by Hedy Durksen. The Manitoba Conference appreciated a man who was “*wirtschaftlich*” (practical, responsible with property). And who would not be captivated by Marie? She reported in 1950:

In cold and stormy weather, my husband drove to Clarkleigh [fifty miles south] in order to teach the young people there. As the wind (at Ashern) was tearing the hay from my fork, my little daughter comforted me with these words: “If one soul is saved, will it not be worth it?” How happy we were when my husband was able to tell us later that, as a result of his visit with guitar and books in hand, one soul had indeed been saved. That was the Lord’s doing.

Marie also told the story of the man who warned another person to stay away from Wiebe. “He’s dangerous!” Why? “His life that he lives [sic] condemns us!”⁹

As we have hinted in these pages, *Reiseprediger* and their successors have repeatedly contended with cultists and others whose emphases were considered damaging and divisive. At Clarkleigh the Wiebes contended with the adverse results of the 1952 Winnipeg campaign of the faith healer Valdez. J. D. Friesen of the tent mission confirmed that Clarkleigh people had been “most enthusiastic about the teachings of this man. There were splits among the believers. Children became disoriented from parents. The Pentecostal movement seemed to take over.” That influence ceased wholly within a year, and Wiebe was invited to come back in April 1953.

As the decade of their ministry progressed, their influence seemed to be growing. They even moved the church building from the country, setting the whole work, quite literally, on a more solid foundation for success. Therefore,

when Ben and Agnes Doerksen left for Tabor College in 1959, after only two years of building on that foundation, and without a replacement in sight, questions were raised. It was certain the Wiebes could not go back. They had exhausted themselves, especially Marie, and required a medically confirmed rest for several years.¹⁰

As it was, the Ashern believers were steered to the Moosehorn Baptists, and the North Kildonan Mennonite Brethren Church served Clarkleigh. The rationale given was that the monies for Ashern should henceforth be applied to Portage la Prairie where the work seemed more promising. This ending was particularly sad for the Wiebes, who could in fact not take up the work in Carman for which they had been slated. There is cause for some reflection when one considers that today there is a non-denominational church in Ashern whose members are said to be “children of Wiebe’s converts.” When Joe and Marie returned for a visit in 1979-80, about one hundred people attended, and they were told, “Here’s the fruit of your work!”¹¹

Winnipegosis

When H. S. Voth challenged Manitoba in 1944 with the statement that there were opportunities at our very door, and that all that was needed was “an organization, a system, and money,” he was referring to the report just given by A. H. Redekopp who had scouted the field up to Winnipegosis on the lake by that name. As a result of further investigative trips as far as The Pas, the brethren Kroeker and Frank Friesen recommended Winnipegosis. As early as December 1944, Anne Dueck, an MBBC student, was presented to the NDC/IMK at the College as the first worker slated for Winnipegosis in 1945. Actually, the pioneer women were Margaret Dyck and Auguste Will. Anne Dueck and Helen Harder joined them later in the summer. They conducted DVBS in seven areas and had good initial attendance in each.

Taken into account in the decision to locate workers here was the presence of about thirty-five families of farming Mennonites. They made up only one ethnic group among several, many of whom had churches in the area. Following a



Helen and John Froese, workers 1946-50. (This picture taken in 1953).

short stay by Abe and Sarah Esau who went to the Belgian Congo, John and Helen Froese of Winnipeg entered upon a well-prepared rural mission in September 1946. Helen used her well-trained soprano voice in the service of mission. The statistical reports reflected a concerted, dedicated effort. For reasons of health they could not carry on, however, and after four years they were replaced by Peter and Helen Martens from Stuartburn who, in a sense, garnered in the fruit of an earlier effort.

When the Martens left in 1955, they were succeeded in rather quick succession by a half-dozen college-trained



Winnipegosis, Manitoba (early 1960s).
Viola and C. Alfred Friesen, with son Ricky, 1962.

couples or single persons who left for various reasons — further education, a more established situation, or the foreign field. The area, always difficult, was thoroughly evaluated during John Block's time, 1964-67, with the help of summer interns, a practice introduced at this time. Even though the much-cherished and experienced Wiebes were sent there in 1967, the mission was closed in 1969, after twenty-five years of labor. Among the deciding factors was the inability to hold such membership as had been built up under the Froeses and Martens. Another factor was the relocation of the United Mennonite church from the country to Winnipegosis. After due consideration, that church agreed to take the responsibility for those who still associated with the Mennonite Brethren work.¹²

One may fairly say, having looked at Lindal, Ashern, and Winnipegosis that many, if not most, college-trained people found those areas too isolated, too daunting, and too circumscribed in their cultural and social amenities, not to mention the difficulties of working with a scattered and declining population. It is not entirely unfair to ask whether professionals trained at MBBC could in fact serve as successfully as Bible school graduates in places like the above. Joe and Marie Wiebe by remote control found greater compatibility than anyone who was resident in Lindal.

Horndean and Carman

Turning now to southern Manitoba's West Reserve, one must look at Horndean and Carman and the "Gospel Light" missions established there by Abe Quiring and Peter Martens, respectively. Horndean for many years was an outpost of Grossweide, a congregation formed in 1896 as an offshoot

of Winkler. Located east of Winkler on Route #14, Horndean lies in *Bergthaler* and *Sommerfelder* country. In the thirties, these two groups rotated services with a small group of Mennonite Brethren, using an old school building. On Mennonite Brethren Sundays, Grossweide would take the service. Then in 1952, the Mennonite Brethren moved a small church building from Altona to Horndean and in the next year placed Abe and Annie Quiring there. The Quirings also served a small group in Morris. When the Grossweide church was destroyed by fire in January 1953, that congregation might have moved to Horndean permanently, as they did in the merger of 1964. Instead, Grossweide rebuilt, only to move that building to Horndean eleven years later.

Quiring always found the work here more discouraging than did Martens. The latter knew Low German well, whereas Quiring probably did not. The Martens and Quirings exchanged places in 1959, a decision which seemed to benefit both areas.

The historic merger in 1964 of Grossweide and Horndean immediately gave the new congregation the character of a full-fledged Mennonite Brethren church. The merger took place under Henry Willms who was one of several short-term preachers from MBBC. It was to this Horndean church that Peter Martens returned after his official retirement, after devoting his whole life to preaching, colportage, and pastoral care in Manitoba's *Randmission*. His ministry was recognized by the Conference in 1962. In spite of all this effort to survive in that area, Horndean closed its doors in 1983. Urbanization had "eroded attendance for years" and those remaining were prepared to attach themselves to other churches nearby.¹³

Carman's story is brighter, even though the beginnings were difficult. A number of persons from surrounding congregations helped in that beginning. Among these were Henry H. Klassen of Morden who organized the first prayer meetings in 1955. Also in that year Peter Martens was asked by a small group to solicit help from the Manitoba Conference. Those who preached and taught for the first two years were J. H. Quiring and H. H. Redekopp, while Peter Penner from Lindal frequently drove to Carman with Klassen.

Assistance was forthcoming in 1956 for a basement structure, dedicated in December 1956. Peter Martens was the first appointed worker. He came in 1957 from his assignment as colporteur and field man. During his relatively brief stay at Carman, Martens saw the completion of the chapel in November 1958. Under Quiring, who made the exchange in 1959, attempts were made rather ambitiously to extend the Carman work to Roland, Sterling, and Eldorado. As everywhere, the work focused on children, youth, Bible studies for adults, and special services of an evangelistic nature. One of their achievements in 1962 was to bring the Carman mission church into full membership in the Conference.¹⁴

Under the energetic leadership of John Unger, a 1953 graduate who had just left Goshen Mennonite Biblical Seminary, the Carman church became consolidated with about forty-five members. For its tenth anniversary, Carman Gospel Light Mennonite Brethren Church was able to burn the mortgage. That was also the year Unger left for an assistant pastor position at Hillsboro Mennonite Brethren Church. Under the dedicated leadership of John Block and Peter Doerksen, the membership grew to about one hundred, and



Carman Baptism, 1958.
Peter Martens left, with J. P. Neufeld, South End Church, assisting.

the Conference subsidy was discontinued altogether in 1975. A new sanctuary was built and dedicated in 1979. Of the five churches discussed here as having developed out of *Randmission*, Carman is the only one to survive. It has taken its place buoyantly among the small town churches of the Manitoba Conference.¹⁵



Carman, Manitoba.
The First Church Building, 1958.

Doerfermission und Zeltmission

One of the more remarkable efforts of the Manitoba brethren was the mission to Mennonite villages in the East and West Reserves. This took the form of colonization evangelism, colportage, and a tent mission, and was sometimes referred to as "the work among our brethren according to the flesh." In a certain sense, it was an attempt to repeat what Heinrich Voth had accomplished in the 1880s — the formation of a group of baptized believers. This work, sixty years later, was not so successful. No new churches were formed except the Carman Church, as we have seen. It was clear from the beginning, as the 1945 report stated, that

as these were all families of our people (*unser Volk*) and belong to churches, it will be

necessary, carefully and wisely, to begin and carry on the work so as to gain and retain their confidence, this in spite of opposition and discrediting of our work elsewhere. But ignorance [of the Word] is so great and a desire for illumination of the Gospel is noticeable everywhere.¹⁶

The reference to denominations here and opposition "elsewhere," of course, referred to the duly constituted *Bergthaler*, *Kleinegemeinde*, *Old Colony*, *Sommerfelder*, and *Schoenwieser Gemeinden*.

Strangely, the one couple most successful among the villagers and farming folk of Southern Manitoba, and who never used any degree of subterfuge as suggested, regrettably, in the above quotation, were Joe and Marie Wiebe. In fact, their beginnings were quite different from the work of others in the mission. They worked beyond the East Reserve proper, yet their apprenticeship in and around Stuartburn made them the missionaries the Manitoba brethren wanted, and employed, as already noticed, at Ashern, Winnipegosis, and Lindal; all, at the same time, if possible! As their story has been told in an anecdotal biography, suffice it to say that Joe and Marie Wiebe came from the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren Church. They early had a very clear indication of God's hand on them for a special reason. They both began to serve in missions around 1933 under the CSSM. Joe sang in a quartet and accompanied John Beersworth, the evangelist. Following Bible training at the Winnipeg Bible Institute, Joe and Marie were married in 1938. They believed they were chosen for fulltime service because they were always either fully engaged in some form of witnessing and outreach or, if not, were pursued by the Holy Spirit until they returned to it. More particularly, in retrospect, they believed that theirs was a gift of personal witnessing.

A Steinbach revival in 1942 pried them loose from a new house and they left in a 1928 Chevy (given to Joe) for Stuartburn. First they lived in a "tar-paper shack," then in a clay house. They were supported by the Christian Endeavour Society composed of six Mennonite churches, including the Mennonite Brethren. In three years they worked in a "pool-hall church" at Gardenton, in a log church at Menisino, and



Menisino Log Church, Joe & Marie Wiebe's Mission, 1943. S.E. Manitoba.
The Congregation.

in a new church at Stuartburn. Thereupon Jake Epp, a minister and member of the Manitoba missions committee, made contact with the Wiebes to invite them to take one of the new fields north of Winnipeg.

What impressed observers was that the Wiebes had broken down the steadfast opposition in the “*Sommerfelder* area” by their modest ways, kindness, non-resistance to intended irritations, and agape love. Their modest beginnings in camp work have led to the formation of Red Rock Bible Camp. Their Stuartburn chapel produced lives that turned to a variety of Christian service avenues and became the foundation of a continuing church.¹⁷

Nothing like this visible long-lasting success followed those who worked directly in the Mennonite villages. The reference is particularly to William Schroeder, who worked



Die Doerfermission (c. 1950).
William W. and Sara Schroeder (picture taken 1957) who served in the East Reserve, near Steinbach.

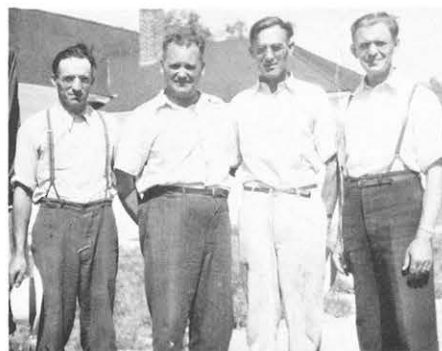
in the Gruenthal area, and to J. J. Nikkel of Elm Creek, who actually moved to Ostervick near Winkler for a short time, and to the summer tent missionaries from MBBC. Gruenthal became the focus of outreach because the Steinbach Mennonite Brethren Church had members living there. As their numbers declined, the church assigned William Schroeder to do colportage there. He found the A. P. Janz family who opened their home for services and invited neighbors to come when Schroeder would lead in Bible study. The Janz home was used for this purpose for ten years, until the father died.

Though he resided in Steinbach, Schroeder carried on as an evangelist, colporteur, and pastor, in all kinds of weather. He travelled often by horse and sleigh, and received a small remuneration and expenses from the Conference. All seemed to be well until 1947-48 when one young woman was baptized and joined the Mennonite Brethren church. This created resistance, antagonism, and some persecution, as reported, for the convert. There followed a decided downturn in attendance, in spite of Schroeder's regular ministry. Many left for Paraguay about that time, others still resisted the Janz invitation, and others left the Steinbach area for the big city. One convert simply left for Winnipeg and was baptized in the South End Church. Schroeder had second thoughts about his work as he pondered the meager results. Of the many who professed conversion, four persons had actually been baptized into the Mennonite Brethren church. When Janz died, the effort in Gruenthal lapsed, even though Peter Martens who lived in Steinbach was appointed colporteur.

One of the results that flowed from Schroeder's work, as well as from the supporting activity of the tent missionaries in 1952 and 1953 was an attempt on the part of the church authorities to introduce reforms that would make *Old Colony* and *Sommerfelder* services more attractive.¹⁸

The prospect in and around Ostervick, near Winkler, was even less promising, as became obvious within a few years. Colportage seemed the most apt way to enter *Sommerfelder* villages. Actually, Winkler Bible School sent out short-term colporteurs as early as 1935. They had grown up in Rosengart, and visited 1,270 homes. One of these students in 1936 and 1937 was J. J. Nikkel. As his widow wrote in 1983, “he went from village to village, door to door, sometimes stopping . . . to pray under a bridge.” He returned to the village of Ostervick in 1944 and reported at the next conference that the doors were wide open for personal work, Bible studies, even preaching. There was, however, considerable opposition, he hastened to add.

The opposition seemed to be aroused when he moved to Ostervick with his family in May 1945. To the conservatives this looked like a long-term intrusion. They had some cause to fear because 1945-46 saw a flurry of activity — Sunday school, church services, Bible studies, hospital visitation, and colportage. The first tent missionaries, Henry Brucks and Henry Poetker, joined him in some of the villages in 1946. They had considerable success with summer Bible school, and evangelism using a public address system. Nevertheless, Nikkel decided it was best for his family to return to his farm near Elm Creek. Though he returned intermittently, and A. C. Klassen served as colporteur four years later, nothing more seems to have been done in and for Ostervick.¹⁹



The Tent Mission, c. 1950.
_____, Jake D. Friesen, Joe Wiebe, and Abe Goerz at Ashern.



John Regehr helping J. D. to shave. 1954.

The Tent Mission

The method of holding evangelistic campaigns much in the manner of a camp meeting was initiated by two MBBC students, Brucks and Poetker, in 1946. In June, the Conference voted to support such a mission with a maximum of five hundred dollars. That would cover the cost of a tent and truck. Having concentrated on the Mennonite villages for several summers, they began to coordinate their campaigns with the new outreach in the north and south. From 1948 to 1954 the leading figure in the tent mission was J. D. Friesen.

For several years, along with Abe Goerz, he conducted campaigns with the Martens and Wiebes.

In 1951, the brethren began to experiment in entirely new areas, looking up unchurched Mennonites, such as the people living at Arden. In 1952 they also included areas of the East Reserve. Though the budget for the six-week duration each summer was kept at about five hundred dollars, the achievement can be indicated by some statistics for the summer of 1953. Within that short period 278 homes were visited and 35 services were conducted. The message was heard by about 1640 people. There were some conversions reported.²⁰

But the work was not continued even though John Regehr in the last report stated,

During the entire summer's ministry the burden for these our kinsmen according to the flesh increased. We reached the conclusion that the primary work of our Conference should be directed toward them. The field is wide; in places it is very hard, but we believe that with much work and prevailing prayer we could realize an evangelical victory. And now that we have a field man [Peter Martens] we see for him a great work in drawing the lost of these people to our attention and holding us responsible for them.²¹

Regehr's life was obviously changed by the experience of that summer. At the time he fancied going into music. But one day J. D. Friesen said to him, "John, today I am going to lead the singing, and you are going to preach!" While sitting on a school bench and preparing his first sermon, he felt the "touch of the Master's hand." That is, he heard a voice suggesting that his career was not to be in music but rather in the ministry of teaching. He closed his report in 1955 with a challenge, stating that when he thought of the earnestness of the converts they had made and compared them with the superficiality of those who supposedly stood behind their mission, he was ashamed. He called for a return to the fervor and earnestness shown by the first brethren and the first Christians. "Where is the fire which should be burning about us and warming the lost with the love of Christ?"²²

In conclusion, this discussion of the attempt to reach into areas considered unevangelized and yet claimed by other Mennonite Churches as their turf, leaves some questions begging to be asked. Keeping the golden rule in mind, we have to point out that *Sommerfelder*, *Bergthaler*, *Rudnerweide*, and *Old Colony* would have scoffed had they known that in 1951 the Manitoba Committee of Reference and Counsel was asked to look into the complaint that some "strange workers from other churches" had been allowed into Mennonite Brethren circles. "Such a situation will only confuse our members," it was said. Doubtless the official *Old Colony* felt much the same about the "strangers" from the Mennonite Brethren.

Admittedly, the Mennonite Brethren may have spurred the various conservative groups to seek to improve their spiritual nurture. One of the tent missionaries insisted that one of the denominations was "pried loose a little" from the traditional rigidities, making provisions for new light to penetrate. Nevertheless, those conservative brethren all had difficulty with the superiority complex evinced by Mennonite Brethren evangelicalism and particularly with

baptism by immersion. They feared the structures that stood behind the colporteurs and tent evangelists. Compare the experience in Lindal between 1935 and 1966. There was a wide cultural gap between the *Sommerfelder*, *Old Colony*, and Mennonite Brethren of the day. That gap was not there to the same extent in Heinrich Voth's day.²³

Winnipeg

As indicated, for the first ten years of the mission church era in Winnipeg, a city mission committee had responsibility for the work. It included the ministry of William Falk (1942-52), of John M. Schmidt (1952-60), and of the Mary-Martha Home under Anna Thiessen (1925-59). There was also, as noted, another mission in the city of Winnipeg, namely the "Gospel Witness to Israel." But these were kept under disparate jurisdictions. When the CIM suggested integration in 1956, it was too late, as we have seen in another chapter.



Winnipeg City Mission, 1941-1950.
William & Helena Falk, in the 1960s.

William Falk was drawn into the work of the North End Church and its outreach as early as 1936. In 1941 he seemed to be the logical choice to fill the shoes of C. N. Hiebert. Falk, a graduate of Winnipeg Bible Institute was the one who gradually untied the mission from the church, though in 1948-49 he was criticized for taking the leadership of the North End Church even if the appointment was temporary. He established the Union Gospel Mission on Main Street, and when MBBC introduced an active program of Christian outreach in 1944, Falk's work was the beneficiary. Even before that he had involved up to eighty people in his first year as Hiebert's successor. He initiated a variety of ministries: a mission Sunday school, evangelistic meetings, home Bible studies, hospital visitation, a prison ministry, and encouraged a tract society, as mentioned.

Falk was not only an energetic missionary, pastor, and coordinator; he was also somewhat of an entrepreneur. In 1949 he purchased and operated a nursing home at 72 Hargrave. In the next year, with the help of the North End Church, he was able to acquire a church and manse on Logan Avenue for ten thousand dollars. This became the

home of an inner city mission. Falk left after ten years to become the leading minister of the North Kildonan Church. In 1965 he took the Morden Church pastorate and served for several years.²⁴

John Schmidt, an MBBC graduate, stepped into city mission work in 1952, when he was already director of the Gospel Light Hour. While Schmidt carried forward what Falk had developed, using the same work force from the College and the churches, he tried "to get people off the street," and added more Sunday schools. He asked Walter Janzen to be superintendent of one Sunday school, and Frank Peters of another. By December 1955 he had formed the first Mennonite mission church in the inner city. Comprising the membership were eleven people from established churches, eleven newly-baptized members, and five others from non-Mennonite churches who had been immersed. Once the group had achieved this status, the members studied the Mennonite Brethren confession of faith. "Finding themselves fully in harmony with the Church in its faith and polity," as John Schmidt stated, "they took what has been recognized as the biblical path to incorporation. Thankful for the help and direction received, and recognizing the need to become self-supporting, the congregation considered this God's will and way."

As it was, this Gospel Light Mennonite Brethren church with its forty-one members was duly accepted into the Manitoba Conference, and thus into the Canadian and General Conferences. It became an early model of incorporation along lines noted in previous chapters. Accompanying the admission was a document laying out the general principles for the spiritual life and the practical relationships to the Conference, as well as the more difficult question of release from membership, wherever this became necessary. The work progressed slowly but steadily, under a succession of pastors, and when the home mission structures were changed to focus also on the inner city, Salem Mennonite Brethren Church, as it came to be called, seemed ideally located to help in that venture.²⁵

Anna Thiessen

The Mary-Martha Home continued its vital ministry until the end of the 1950s. In 1950-51 it served as many as 250 girls. Anna Thiessen was honored several times for her singular contribution to the Winnipeg mission and especially to the home for girls established to meet the needs of the migrants of the mid twenties. In 1947, at a reunion in British Columbia of former residents of the Home, no fewer than 240 participated, and in 1959, when the Home was sold, the proceeds were used to ensure Anna Thiessen a pension for life. She retired for the first time in 1947 because of illness. At that time her sister Martha came to replace her. One can almost detect a wry sort of humor in Anna's ruminations about all those who had assisted her since 1925. Each one, almost without exception, (except herself) was carried off by some hitherto confirmed bachelor.²⁶

Brandon

Another city mission took its place in the Manitoba spectrum in 1954. Brandon, the western wheat city in Manitoba, 130 miles from Winnipeg, site of a university of Baptist origins,

became the home of an increasing number of Mennonite Brethren. Hence, Abram J. Froese of Boissevain, 60 miles straight south, was asked to initiate a church in Brandon by using the nuclear approach. With the participation of surrounding Mennonite Brethren country churches, and those residing in Brandon, Froese began Sunday services in a house on Russell Street in November 1954. He was motivated by the thought that the younger urbanizing generation ought to have the challenge of church planting, rather than taking the easy way of joining a Baptist church.

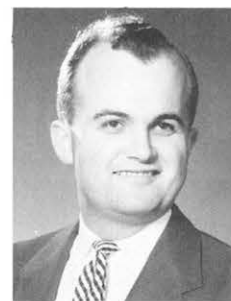


1957

Ground breaking at Brandon with:

_____, Abram J. Froese, first worker, _____, Lawrence Warkentin (plain jacket), _____.

Brandon was fortunate to have a succession of vigorous leaders, once the pioneering work was done by Froese. Lawrence Warkentin went to Brandon as an MBBC graduate evincing, as the press stated four years later, "all the enthusiasm and vitality of a young man who meets the challenge of his vocation." The work expanded because of his meaningful personal ministry in homes and hospitals. A first church building was built in 1957. Several baptisms followed. Warkentin opened a mission in the east end of the city and gave Martha Stobbe charge.



Brandon Man. (1960-4).
Harvey Gossen, pastor.

After four years of developing a full range of programs, the Warkentins were called to a field in Austria. They were replaced by Harvey Gossen who expanded the work during his four years. Martha Stobbe, at Riverview, was succeeded by George Reimer until the Brandon Mennonite Brethren church under Henry Willms absorbed the Riverview extension.²⁷

How different was the development of Brandon and Carman from Winnipegosis and Ashern! Carman was in the center of a preferred and prosperous farming community, and Brandon, as Manitoba's second largest city, was expected to become a growth area. The city of Brandon soon encompassed a growing number of professionals, business people, and farmers from the Alexander area. When Brandon built a second edifice in 1978 and renamed the church Richmond Park Mennonite Brethren, the membership called seminary-trained men as pastors. In spite of its missionary beginnings, Richmond Park is not necessarily outreach-oriented, nor Anabaptist. In fact, the congregation seems, like so many others we will encounter in Part Three, evangelical-fundamentalist.²⁸

B. Saskatchewan

Essentially, we must deal here with the period between 1943 and 1954. Those were crucial years, from the time that G. W. Peters asked the NSDC for assistance to the full incorporation of the Mission under a new name, the Mennonite Brethren Mission of Saskatchewan. Within that twelve year period we can see a repetition, in part, of the struggle that was witnessed in British Columbia during the war. There were the thrusting, somewhat brash voluntarists, supported by a society (for some time interdenominational), challenging the more conservative brethren in the structured District Conferences. Nevertheless, the work of the WCM had such high visibility that many in the Conference could identify with the Mission.



On the death of Ben Kroeker, first field director of WCM, 1943.



G. W. Peters. c. 1970.

The story will be clearer if we divide it into two parts: one, the grand constitutional change that was necessary to bring the two sides of the home missions constituency into a working relationship; and two, a sweeping review of the dozen fields that had been developed, mostly in "small town" Saskatchewan.

There was a sort of working relationship between the two wings between 1937 and 1943. They were each professedly interested in promoting God's kingdom, but because of the interdenominational and societal character of the WCM (which included a majority of Mennonite Brethren), the general admiration for the zeal of the Bethanyites could easily be reduced to a grudging recognition of their success. For example, soon after integration had taken place, the appointed colporteur in his report did not even mention WCM, stating only that the "shepherding of the flock" had been more neglected on the Conference side than evangelism on the Mission side.

In the Rosthern district, as in Herbert, there was a *Kreisleitung*, the Home Missions Committees we have already met. This *Kreisleitung*, at its annual meetings and at the NDCs, reported on work among Russians, the involvement in deeper life services, the development of choir work, the ministry of the city mission in Saskatoon, and the status of the "preacherless churches" such as Speedwell, north of Glaslyn.

One of the most significant and long-lasting efforts was the colportage of Jacob P. Dyck. Beginning in 1936, he continued in this ministry until he moved to Virgil. Alongside this work of the "Innermost mission," including the urban outreach in the city, grew the WCM, a plant of some vigor, which some thought of as an obnoxious weed. To others it gave off the fragrance of a prairie rose, though there were some hidden thorns.¹

Going Denominational

It seemed that the NSDC was ready to discuss a working relationship by 1943. That had not been the case a year earlier. Many brethren were still asking for clarification. Nevertheless, Peters had challenged the *Kreisleitung* to continue to send their young people to Hepburn and to permit them to work in the Mission. Without these workers and the Bible school's support, he stated: "We are lost!"

By June 1943 the Conference seemed ready. Ben Kroeker reported on behalf of WCM, consisting of G. W. Peters as president, D. A. Wirsche as vice-president, F. F. Froese as secretary-treasurer, and himself as field director. They had twelve stations, eight couples, a radio ministry, and missionary, A. A. Dyck, in Colombia. The rationale was straightforward enough: the WCM constituency and Saskatchewan Conference had both suffered considerable loss to British Columbia and Ontario as a result of the depression and the intervening war. This meant that the Mission needed financial help as well as human resources. British Columbia was benefiting, as was Ontario, from the interest in outreach first created in Saskatchewan. WCM was proving to be a model for these provinces, as well as for Alberta. Besides, the Mission had attracted attention in the Board of Foreign Missions in Hillsboro, partly because of the new dimension in foreign missions: Colombia. And more than that, the American brethren were excited about the awakening in what they called Northwest Canada.

One other reason that became clear in 1945-46 was that J. H. Epp, BBI's principal, could not continue to carry forward the Mission of which he was by then president. It all added up to the need for financial support. Whereas the total income for 1941-42 was around forty-seven hundred dollars, including support of Dyck in Colombia, what was really required to cover the modest rate of fifty dollars a month per couple and other costs, was a minimum of twelve thousand dollars. The work had suffered because workers were getting less than half of that. It was believed that the entire Conference — meaning both districts — would have to work together to raise that amount.²

The Mission's offer came down to the following: once recognized, it would take responsibility for the "preacherless churches" (such as Warman and Carrot River), take over the city mission in due course, and support provincial work among the Russian people. In return, Peters demanded several things. The most important was that the Mission should be allowed to retain its interdenominational character, because the WCM felt responsible for bringing the gospel to diverse ethnic groups. Many Old Colony Mennonites, Doukhobors, Sudeten Germans, and other Europeans had been touched by Mission voluntarists.

Though very little is known about the negotiations that preceded the conference, according to those closest to the scene, the results were not the best for Peters personally, even though all his aims were realized. They were also not that good for the WCM as hitherto constituted. "Going denominational" had several drawbacks. One was the antipathy built up against its founder. He was seemingly looked upon as too forward, too lecturing, too critical of the Conference. For example, in 1942, he seemed to demand a clarification of the *Kreisleitung's* attitude toward the Mission, but then destroyed some good will by stating all too plainly that he thought "many were unenlightened and uninformed."

William Carey-like (1792), he was challenging people to move forward — and do it his way, at his pace! "*Vaeterchen*" Toews' opinion was that if *he* at any time had lectured the Conference in that way, he would have been severely admonished and perhaps ostracized. G. W. Peters challenged "sacred cows," like Klaas Enns had done in British Columbia. According to Margaret Epp, there were many "Bethanyites" who were not thrilled by the proposal to go denominational. In *Proclaim Jubilee*, she reproduced some of the current feelings. Some mourned as though a death had occurred. Some felt a "loss of vigor" and "a noticeable lack of individual vision" when WCM went denominational.³

H. A. Willems

One cannot help but come to the conclusion from an analysis of the timing and the personnel involved that the adoption of the WCM by the Saskatchewan districts was easier once Peters had left. H. A. Willems (father of Sam Willems and leader in the North), entered the breach in 1944. In his paper entitled "Clarification of the Principles and General Rules of the WCM," he stated that it was time to allay fears about the principles that had been misunderstood. For one thing, the statement gently removed the interdenominational handle. He then explained that other provinces were expanding and consolidating their work, and

the likelihood of financial help from outside sources was slim. Above all, he affirmed the need to incorporate converts into believers' churches, which might very well be formed in the areas then being served.

This document in essence was reaffirmed and adopted in 1946. In March of that year, representatives from each of the two districts met and, following discussion, decided to recommend a partial merger for the purpose of supervising the city mission, the WCM, and coordinating questions relating to the Canadian Conference. Other local concerns (the innermost mission) presumably would still remain the responsibility of each *Kreisleitung*.

News of this remarkable change was taken to the Canadian Conference. Work among Old Colony Mennonites at Hochfeld, Hague Ferry, and Northvale (Mildred) was now the responsibility of the entire Saskatchewan Conference. David Wiens's work among Russians at Eagle Creek was at least partly supported. Camp work, to be undertaken at two locations, and DVBS involved a large staff and hundreds of children.

One more constitutional step was necessary in preparation for the next milestone. In 1952 a new "constitution for Mission Churches supported by the [Saskatchewan] Mennonite Brethren Conference," again written by Willems, defined Mission Church as "an organized fellowship of believers meeting together at a specific location under the auspices of the Mennonite Brethren Church. . . ." Membership, associate membership, privileges, and limitations were delineated in acceptable terms. Organizational, administrative, and Conference relationships were clearly laid out, including the progress of such a mission church to "full membership" and independence. In line with this evolution, Saskatchewan brethren changed the name from Western Children's Mission to Mennonite Brethren Mission of Saskatchewan. The new designation was more accurate, since the entire West was no longer its field, nor were children alone the object of outreach. The 1952 constitution remained the basic document of the Mission, though in 1962 the brethren were prepared to study the new principle of "doing away with the Mission station aspect." Actually, this was delayed about another decade, as we have already had occasion to remark.⁴

The Mission Churches

The brethren who joined Willems in leadership of the new Mission at the board level in the fifties were J. S. Adrian and Art Martens as director, assisted by John F. Froese as secretary-treasurer. J. J. Thiessen was appointed as the field man in the south, and Walter Wiebe was appointed in the north. These were the brethren who supervised the dozen fields of 1954, to which we must now turn: Blaine Lake, Carrot River, Foam Lake, Hague Ferry, Lucky Lake, Meadow Lake, Mildred, Pierceland, Regina, Saskatoon, Swift Current, and Warman. At that time there were only three areas in the south: Regina, Lucky Lake, Swift Current, and West Bank Camp near Swift Current. The remainder lay in the north, where Saskatoon naturally formed the chief urban center.

But alphabet and geography alone cannot provide the best organizing tool for analysis. It seems that half of the WCM stations fell into the category of "preacherless churches." That is, at one time there were many thriving Mennonite Brethren churches, completely self-supporting, under the

leadership of lay farmer-preachers. Though they suffered sharply from the exodus of the depression years, in the fifties the Mission could use the nucleus as a bridge of continuity and for expansion through organized outreach. Thus self-supporting groups became mission stations under the Mennonite Brethren Mission of Saskatchewan. Those to be treated in this category are Lucky Lake, Warman, Foam Lake, and Carrot River. Other convenient categories for analysis are the fields wholly devoted to outreach among Old Colony people and the Doukhobors at Blaine Lake. This leaves those of mixed ethnic groups, including Mennonites, such as Pierceland and Meadow Lake, and of course the city missions in Saskatoon, Regina and Swift Current.⁵

The "preacherless churches" were only one step away from becoming what Rudy Wiebe called "tombstone communities." For example, Speedwell-Jackson Mennonite Brethren Church, where Wiebe grew up, registered 30 members in 1930 and boasted of 114 six years later. In 1948, 12 were left, and by 1950 the church was closed. At one time Speedwell had an active church life led by J. A. Enns, and a Bible school led by Dan Wirsche. Though none of the members of that community are as well known as the author of the phrase "tombstone communities," they may nevertheless be found in all walks of life and in many Canadian congregations. This story was duplicated in many areas. We cannot begin to name them all, nor even go into the rise and fall of the homesteading policy in North Saskatchewan. But we can suggest that the spiritual disintegration of some of these communities was arrested because the WCM gave them new life.⁶

Lucky Lake

Lucky Lake was one of those areas that recovered from the ravages of the depression. This town is one of a number lying near the banks of the South Saskatchewan River as it takes a big bend northward towards Saskatoon. Others are Beechy and Elbow. Whereas Elbow was peopled by *Russlaender* and Americans, Lucky Lake was an *American-Kanadier* settlement dating from 1905. *Reiseprediger* served there intermittently, and then around 1940 Lucky Lake became the object of WCM outreach. The first fruit came



Lucky Lake, Sask. baptism, (July 1959)
Art Martens, field director, MBM/Sask., Wilbert Dyck, Helen Dyck, Laura Dueck, Alvin Penner, pastor.

through DVBS, and by 1945 a group of believers asked for a worker. J. S. and Lena Adrian, who did the pioneer work, began with Bible studies in homes and a girls' choir. They bought an old building, moved it to town, and remodeled it.

Rudy and Erica Janzen went there from MBBC in 1952. They were singularly successful with choir work. At Easter 1953 the church recorded an attendance of 190. The Janzens were soon lured away, however, by the greater challenges, they felt, of the Herbert Bible School and its young people, and the prospect of teaching Bible and piano. Then too, it was hard for someone raised in urban Ontario to make ends meet on approximately one hundred dollars a month.

Frank and Bertha Froese, who had served the home office of the WCM, took over the work with perhaps a more typical resignation. Led by personnel subsequently who lived closer to the dryland farming experience, Lucky Lake was brought along as a mission church. In the early 1960s it had twenty-seven baptized members.⁷

Warman

In the 1930s, Warman became the first Mennonite village north of Saskatoon. As the WCM *Challenger* put it in 1949, it was "the first of the Mennonite settlements that stretched their way for forty odd miles north of the hub city." By the 1970s it had become a bedroom suburb of Saskatoon. Between 1939 and 1944, the Mennonite Brethren churches of Dalmeny and Saskatoon were responsible for services there. During that time, local Christians built the first church. Because the WCM worked here diligently every summer, the church was turned over to the WCM in 1944. The John Guenthers were the first resident workers. Menno Lepp, who succeeded them, called Warman a mission field because "many of our own people are not converted."



Warman, Sask. (1949).
The Menno Lepp family, who lived and served at Mildred, subsequently: Menno Lepp, with Edna, and children Roger and Lois.

Menno and Edna (Jeschke) Lepp were graduates of BBI (1939) and had attended PBI for one year. Typical of many WCM workers, they felt definitely called, saw fruit, and rejoiced in the "spiritual blessings" even though their material needs were barely met. Norman and Mary Fehr tried to consolidate the converts and built up a large Sunday school, but they found that many were joining "some fundamental church." Frank Froese complained to the Saskatchewan Conference that there was "so pitifully little fruit." Matters brightened in 1967 with some good results because of the Leighton Ford Crusade, but not in terms of adults. Warman, as is well known, came to public attention in 1980 when Mennonites stood firm against a nuclear development in the area. Perhaps the results of the gospel were greater than had been thought, or came in ways not expected in the 1960s.⁸

Carrot River

Geographically isolated from the mainstream of Mennonites, Carrot River is a farming community lying on the same parallel as Prince Albert and probably closer to The Pas, Manitoba, than to Saskatoon. Carrot River had a considerable Mennonite population and a United Mennonite church. The Mennonite Brethren work had an unusual beginning, and the association has always been tenuous. A work initiated by the Continental International Mission in 1944 became the focus of the MB Mission of Saskatchewan in 1957. Victor Nickel was ordained at Hague Ferry before being sent to Carrot River as missionary. His family was warmly welcomed by the "dear old brother" who acted as leader of the Gospel Mission with its street front chapel. There was great rejoicing as twelve persons seemed eager to be baptized. When special evangelistic services were held in this community in November 1957, United Mennonite, Pentecostal, and Apostolic churches participated in the joint effort. Nickel was instrumental in building a new church in 1959 and bringing the group to a self-supporting position while it remained under the umbrella of the Mennonite Brethren Mission of Saskatchewan.

This congregation of fifty members continues this tenuous relationship to the Conference under the leadership of Conrad Peters who has been pastor since 1977. The problem was identified by Neil Funk when he was pastor there (1965-68) as one of wariness of Mennonite Brethren polity. They are still struggling with a feeling which goes deeper than the problem of geographical distance even though they are grateful for the financial help and leadership assistance that has been forthcoming.⁹

Hague Ferry

One of the concerns of the Bethany Prayer Band and the WCM from the beginning was to reach *Old Colony* Mennonite people scattered throughout regions of what they called the North. Actually, there were communities near Hepburn such as Hague Ferry (Hochfeld) on the road to Rosthern from Saskatoon, where they began to work in the very early years. They also went to Mildred (Northvale), east of Spiritwood, a decade later. Much of the work was conducted in Low German, which all Saskatchewan Mennonite Brethren spoke, often as a matter of preference.

One of the earliest missionaries here was Abram B.



F. F. Froese, DVBS group at Hague Ferry in 1937.

Voth, an early secretary of the Bethany Prayer Band. He and Frank Froese conducted DVBS at Hague Ferry and Blaine Lake, and then in 1936 Voth turned his attention to Hague Ferry. His uncle Cal Stierner operated the ferry there. What Voth found was an area without a public school "extending some six miles on either side of the ferry on the north side of the [North Saskatchewan] River. I did a walking survey . . . and found more than forty children of school age not attending any public school. It was a pathetic situation and one which the government of the time should never have tolerated." The *Old Colony* and *Bergthaler* Mennonites living there, trying to glean a living from sandy soil, as Voth was told, were "too poor to pay taxes." Besides, it was believed these people were "not much interested in having a school."

This was a challenge to Voth and his successor. In 1936 he taught DVBS classes in the morning and the "three Rs" in the afternoon. A year later, Peter Tilitsky and George Giesbrecht helped Voth. Children of the ministers were not allowed to come because the Mennonite Brethren sang hymns using "notes" (do re me . . .), while the *Old Colony* used "*Ziphern*" (numbers). Though there were some conversions among the children, the minds of many parents seemed closed to the gospel. When Voth left, he trained to become a teacher and, at a later date, retrained to become a doctor, well known in Saskatoon.¹⁰

As a result of this early effort, Hague Ferry was adopted by the WCM as the first mission field. In 1940, with George Giesbrecht as the leading worker, the Mission built a school



Hague Ferry, Sask. (1940-1).
George Giesbrecht using John Dyck's blacksmith shop as home of first SS and Day School (in German).

and church. Until then, various homes and P. Dyck's blacksmith shop served as the locale for DVBS. Much effort was poured into the Hague Ferry mission. During 1942-44, H. G. Rempel, who conducted evening Bible classes at Hochfeld, received help from Dan Wirsche, Frank Froese, and other BBS students. Margaret Epp was teaching at BBS, and also helped in the Hague Ferry mission, as well as in the Hochfeld Bible School. Louis Goertz worked at Hague between 1943 and 1947.

When full-time missionaries could not be found or placed there, teachers would carry on Sunday school in addition to their other duties. Among these teachers were Helena Unruh in the late forties and Jean Fehr and Erna Bartel in 1951-52. Theodore and Frieda Martens were located there for one year (1950-51), but then left for Tabor College and an overseas assignment. After that a succession of four couples — the Victor Nickels, George Reimers, Waldo Lepps, and Jake Kehlrs — tried to build up a believers' church. Though a George Brunk campaign at Osler during Nickel's time caused some stir, each couple found that there was no promise of expansion or self-maintenance. The church was moved to Hague in 1960, and J. J. Neufeld, the Low German-preaching evangelist, was brought in to preach. During the next summer Willie Baerg served as evangelist.

Nevertheless, the Kehlrs became discouraged. There was much opposition even when they appeared most successful by getting the attendance up to seventy. Nineteen sixty-four was a crucial year. The *Rudnerweide* (EMMC) built a church, and three teaching couples resigned. In 1965, Kehler stated that "it may seem as if we should not be in Hague any longer trying to establish a fourth church in a small town of about 500 to 550 residents." Nevertheless they carried on manfully until 1968 when the Conference decided to withdraw support.¹¹

Mildred and Blumenort

Northvale, south of Mildred and north of Mullingar, once had a Mennonite Brethren church. Those who remained in the "poplar-wooded" area were Low German speaking people from a "staunch ecclesiastical church order."¹⁹ Students working under the WCM nevertheless dared to enter there in the late 1930s. Because there was no educational program in the district, the Mission erected a log house plastered with mud that doubled as school and teacherage. Abe and Rubina Pauls of Glenbush moved there in 1942 and stayed ten years. Their support fluctuated from nothing to thirty-five dollars a month as they lived sacrificially in the one-room upstairs. When the department of education saw the interest that had been created in learning by 1948, it established a school district named Hurricane and erected a school not far from the Mission's property. The Pauls were replaced by Menno and Edna Lepp in 1952, who moved there from Warman. Lepp was the only WCM worker who possessed a teaching certificate. They were succeeded by John and Luella Kehler who remained until 1961, when the Mildred property was sold. It was discovered later that Kehler had sold it quite independently of the Mission to a Mrs. Anne Unrau for thirty dollars.

Another area of similar endeavor was initiated at Blumenort, south of Swift Current. Originally, in the 1920s, there was a church there, but the area became preacherless except for Art Martens of Blumenhof who witnessed in the

area. Those who remained were *Sommerfelder* people, and three Mennonite Brethren families. In 1948, the Mission stationed the Otto Derksens there, but prospects were actually very low in 1951 when Peter and Irene Tilitsky replaced the Derksens. They remained only a year and then accepted a call to teach at the Yarrow Bible School. Blumenort was then turned over to another mission to avoid duplication of effort.¹²

Meadow Lake

Going northwest from Hepburn to faraway Pierceland, one passes through Meadow Lake, about 130 kilometers north of North Battleford. Near Meadow Lake are two areas, Compass and Rapid View, of mixed population, including some Mennonite Brethren families. In the course of time the witness here was urbanized by taking the work to Meadow Lake, the major center of the area. When Compass was first listed among Saskatchewan Mennonite Brethren congregations in 1938, the membership stood at sixteen with Frank Janzen as the leader.



Compass, Sask. Log Cabin, c. 1950.
David & Rose Nickel lived here in 1950s.

When David Nickel arrived in 1950, he found a "handful of discouraged believers and a church that was about to be dissolved. . . ." Rejuvenated, the membership and numbers of adherents grew. The congregation showed its will to build an enduring church by improving the buildings. The David Nickels at first lived in a pioneering-style log cabin. A



Rapid View, Sask. (1959).
Arno and Lena Fast, and son Jamie.

graduate of BBS who hailed from Borden, a brother of Victor Nickel, David worked energetically with evangelical groups, including the CSSM and the Northern Canada Evangelical Mission, which we will see again at Pierceland. The David Kleins were always very supportive.

Arno Fast, from Dalmeny, a teacher and an MBBC graduate, settled at nearby Rapid View. He moved the Compass church there, and also began childrens' work in the larger town of Meadow Lake in 1957. The Fast's also built a manse in town before they left in 1960.

Once the congregation of Compass-Rapid View was prepared to move to Meadow Lake, they bought a Lutheran church, during the time Alfred Quiring was there. Under the longer leadership of William and Agatha Buller, two new churches were constructed, one in 1964 and another four years later. The name was changed from Compass to Meadow Lake Mennonite Brethren Church. The congregation became self-supporting under Ben and Anne Klassen (1975-77), and a third church was built in 1980.¹³



Meadow Lake Church.
William & Agatha Buller, c. 1964.
Lowell, Elaine, Marvin.

Pierceland

John E. Priebe wrote of Pierceland, not far from Cold Lake, Alberta, that it was "a romantic town with its wonderful pine trees," having about three hundred people. It now has a small hospital and a high school. When mission work began there under the WCM in 1938, however, it was a frontier town, and one had to be rugged to survive. Many workers did manual labor in order to make ends meet. Many worked during the summer months only, while others were found willing to drive up for the weekend. Because there was a long interval between the departure of A. A. Wiebe in 1950 and the arrival of John and Margaret Willems, the chapel doors had been closed, and Willems had "almost a pioneer field." It was pioneering indeed, among a mixed population of Catholics, other mainline church adherents, Adventists,



Pierceland, Sask. Sept/60.
Five pastors who served at Pierceland — John Willems, Albert Pahlke, Waldo Lepp, George Reimer, A. A. Wiebe.

and Apostolics, as well as Mennonite Brethren. The latter provided the "only evangelical work" in the town. There was also a United Mennonite church at Northpine, twelve miles north.

Consolidation came when George and Elma Reimer served Pierceland from 1959 to 1963. Under George's leadership and inspired by his example of hard work, the congregation built a new church. He cut the logs, planed the lumber, helped with the construction, served as evangelist, and brought the congregation in line with the Conference. A full-time teacher, Walter Reimer and his wife Velma helped them toward self-support, and built a new residence. Carroll Hill, a Baptist minister with the Northern Canada Evangelical Mission, served the church from 1971 to 1974 and provided some insights into life there. The Pierceland people made ends meet, and even made some profit from the annual fish sales. The church would actually buy up "large amounts of the different fish," take them to Saskatoon, and peddle them "mostly among the Mennonite folks." This became an annual money-raising venture of the church. Hill participated in this once with Albert Pahlke and nearly froze as solid as the fish at -50 degree Celsius. On the way home, the truck's carburetor acted up, the engine stalled, and "like I said, we nearly froze!" Most of the preachers since George Reimer's day have been employed as teachers or carpenters.¹⁴

Blaine Lake

Turning now to the Russian field, we must look at Blaine



Blaine Lake, Sask. 1948.
The M.B. — related group served intermittently by D. B. Wiens and Abram Huebert.
Picture taken by Abram Huebert, Leamington.

Lake and the Doukhobors. The Great Russians at Arelee (Eagle Creek) have been careful to differentiate themselves from the "Spirit Wrestlers." The latter concentrated at Blaine Lake, north of Petrofka. Nevertheless, they were all Russian-speaking people and became the object of mission or spiritual assistance by those Mennonite Brethren who had command of the language. We have already pointed to D. B. Wiens who preached at Blaine Lake intermittently between 1943 and 1955. Peter Esau was the first resident worker when the CIM was in charge of the Russian work. Following MBBC, Esau actually wanted to go overseas, but he was refused because of advanced age. He therefore took assignments in Manitoba, Ontario and then Blaine Lake. In conjunction with the last-mentioned, someone suggested to him that he could console himself by working with the Doukhobors, because this would closely resemble work overseas.



Blaine Lake Sask. (c. 1956).
The Peter J. Esau family: Peter and Anne, with children.

Esau always gave enthusiastic and imaginative reports. With reference to his mission he claimed it was the only evangelical one and that it had the only Sunday School in town. Not only was Blaine Lake a wide field, given the outlying areas, but it was a *Kriegsfeld* (a field of battle). "There's a terrific struggle going on," he said, "between the forces of evil (as represented by the Catholic priesthood and the leading Doukhobors) and the forces of the Holy Spirit." A practical man, Esau added to the chapel, built a house for the worker, and supplemented his income by carpentry.

Abe and Stella Dueck, after his graduation from Briercrest, carried on with the bilingual services in English and Russian. Dueck had good attendance and considered there were "untold opportunities." He elaborated on the "battleground" more fully than Esau. There were in fact many theological and philosophical differences among Doukhobors. The coming of

the Jehovah's Witnesses in 1961-66 added to the divisions. He reported in 1962 as follows:

A new Jehovah's Witness Hall is being built in Blaine Lake. They find their best field . . . amongst the dissatisfied Doukhobors, those who have been confused. The orthodox Doukhobor will never fall for anything like J. W. teaching. They approach the Doukhobor with the Bible verse they like best: "Thou shalt not kill." We don't go to war, and neither do you, so we must be the same. Most Doukhobors however, are alert enough to reject this. There are Greek Orthodox and Ukrainian Catholics as well as the Roman Catholics. These are hard to reach. They are civilized and educated heathen. Our Doukhobors believe in education, the more and the higher the better. But as far as their faith is concerned, I'm confused. Some tell me they do not believe in the Bible at all. It is not God's Word at all. How would God be interested in war? That's all the Old Testament is full of. Still others are devoted to the commandment: "Thou shalt not kill" that they [sic] are strict vegetarians as a result. Then there are some who are genuinely born again and have a real burden for their people¹⁵

Like others, Dueck found the struggle for the loyalty of these spirit wrestlers difficult. Nevertheless, on August 7, 1966, under the leadership of George Reimer, this chapel group was received into the Conference as the Blaine Lake Mennonite Brethren Church.¹⁶

Though Blaine Lake may have been very difficult, workers have been persistent, sometimes supporting themselves as teachers or in other occupations. Various evangelistic crusades have been conducted in Blaine Lake. For example, Rudy Boschman and the Campbell-Reese team came in 1969-70. Nevertheless, in spite of much activity, the work has remained small and is today led by Bill and Margaret Bolan. He is of Doukhobor background and she of French-Canadian Catholic. The membership stood at eleven in 1979.

A significant footnote to Doukhobor history took place in 1970. Totally unexpectedly, a representative group of about sixty Doukhobors from Blaine Lake presented a gift of over four thousand dollars to the Quakers because, seventy years earlier, the Quakers had helped them come to Canada.¹⁷

Saskatoon

In a previous section we brought the Saskatoon story to the mid forties. While H. S. Rempel continued to serve in his usual capacities as colporteur, itinerant, and hospital visitor, his wife, Anna, was still assisting girls in finding employment and providing temporary shelter for them. In 1950, however, the city mission committee appointed two new workers, Helen Giesbrecht and Abe J. Sawatsky. Giesbrecht had been serving in Blaine Lake area in the previous year. Her assignment was to conduct children's work, in support of the new mission to be planted in

southwest Saskatoon. Abe and Leona Sawatsky both attended "Elim" Bible School in Yarrow before taking further training at MBBC. Other preparation for service followed at County Line under the WCCM. They accepted the call from Saskatoon where, together with Giesbrecht and many young people from the first Mennonite Brethren church, they conducted about forty Bible clubs.

During Sawatsky's time a basement chapel was constructed. The superstructure was added and dedicated in December 1956. As Giesbrecht continued her work among children, Sawatsky left the work for the church in Kelowna, British Columbia, where he became ill with cancer. He was replaced by Lawrence Redekopp who came from the South Side Mission in Swift Current. Under Redekopp's leadership, the Saskatoon mission church became self-supporting and was renamed West Portal Mennonite Brethren Church.¹⁸

Regina

It is strange that the Mennonite Brethren should have been so tardy in moving to Regina, the provincial capital. Perhaps Moose Jaw and Swift Current, west of Regina on the Trans-Canada Highway, two larger centers closer to Mennonite farming congregations, supplied the urban needs.



Regina, Sask. DVBS, 1942.
The dark building is the first Regina M.B. church home, McKay Street.

Beginnings in Regina were modest. David Niessen worked generally under the WCM in Regina's East End in 1942-43, beginning with DVBS and a small Sunday school on McKay Street in a humble chapel. In 1943-44 the Herbert church took responsibility for a small group that was formed when people of Mennonite Brethren background left the German Baptist church. Their first leader was Abram Klassen. When George Braun, a BBS and MBBC graduate was assigned to Regina, he found Mennonite Brethren and United Mennonite members worshipping together. Services were divided between German in the morning and English in the evening.

Toward the end of Helmut Klassen's stay, Helen Giesbrecht moved to Regina from Saskatoon to lead in children's outreach. She challenged the church to work with her in the many obvious avenues of witnessing. During George Dyck's pastoral ministry, 1960-68, even though Mennonite Brethren were then moving to Regina in greater numbers, many were not loyal to their church affiliation. He expressed his disappointment that many were not necessarily



Regina, Sask.
George & Carol Braun, (1959), Marjorie, Judith & Kenneth (in arms).

interested in joining the Hill Avenue Mennonite Brethren Church.

When Regina became self-supporting and no longer reported to the Conference, this apparently did not end the agitation for some outreach. Cliff Jantzen, who served as an assistant to both Peter Teigroeb and Don Balzer, found Lawrence Redekopp, field director, ready to assist in planting a new work. When Jantzen left for Lanigan, the Regina church relocated to the West End in order to build what was named Parliament Community Church.¹⁹

Swift Current

One of the more interesting stories of city mission work focuses on Swift Current, both in its beginning and ending. Gerhard W. Peters preached in Swift Current in about 1932 while employed on a dairy farm. According to Helen Thiessen, Peters was invited to speak, and thirty-one people were converted. It is not clear whether this event is directly related to the beginning of a church or mission. In any case the initial membership of the Swift Current church in 1934 was thirty.

The mission seems to have been started by Art Martens in 1941. A. H. Wieler was the first full-time worker in 1943. The couple that made a mark with their work among children were George and Annie Koehn who labored successfully from 1945 to 1950. Koehn's father was a deacon in the city church. They also did hospital visitation and tract distribution. For some reason, each successive worker made it quite clear that the emphasis in the South Side Mission was on children, not on church. This was the case with Lawrence Redekopp and Alvin Penner who succeeded Redekopp in 1956. Penner's letter to J. S. Adrian demonstrated what the problem was: the Mennonite Brethren church was "dead set against organizing the mission into a church." The Penners stayed only two years, and the David Nickels only one.²⁰

When Adrian came to the chapel in the fall of 1959, having been director of the Mission and a committee member for some years, he found support in the small congregation and the Saskatchewan Missions committee for an application to



Swift Current, Sask. (1966).
David Nickel, pastor briefly at South Side, Swift Current. He served at Compass, Hamilton, and South Abbotsford.



WCM of Sask. (1953).
Jake S. and Lena Adrian, for many years director of WCM until he took South Side Mission, Swift Current, into the AGC, as told.

the Conference to be recognized as a full-fledged church. Adrian wrote, "To this the local Swift Current Mennonite Brethren church [then building a new church] objected, believing the city did not warrant two Mennonite Brethren churches, that it was too small a city, but that the Mission church should continue . . . as a Mission church outreach. This was accepted by the Conference and thus we in the Mission church continued. . . ."²¹

The stories differ a bit regarding what happened in November 1959. Eugene Martens, who provided interim leadership according to the conference decision, referred to "the collapse of the work." Adrian, on the other hand, knowing of the local Mennonite Brethren church's blockage to his desire to give South Side a rightful church status, took an opportunity offered by the local Associated Gospel church. Why should he not become the pastor and take with him those members from South Side who were prepared to change affiliation? Four families transferred, and others, like the Eugene Martens, remained. Adrian was released

with regret from his obligations to the Saskatchewan Conference.

But the story did not end there. Ernie and Esther Isaac carried the childrens' work forward and had fairly good attendance, but did not stay beyond 1963. The Conference then gave way and, with Martens' help, the South Side work was gradually incorporated into the Mennonite Brethren church. Of those families who left in 1959, one came back in 1980. Frank Rempel, a prominent business man and manufacturer, who had risen high in the Associated Gospel church's Brigade work, liked what he observed in the Bridgeway Community Church (Mennonite Brethren) under the leadership of Peter Nikkel, and returned.²²

Motivation

Looking back at this period, one has to ask where the inspiration came from. How was it that young people were persuaded to attend Bible school and enter fields of service that paid so little? For the fifteen years after the war, WCM remuneration was sometimes well under one hundred dollars a month. They received assistance with housing and produce-supply on a voluntary basis. Hardly anyone under the Mennonite Brethren Mission of Saskatchewan in the entire 1950s ever reached a salary of two hundred dollars. Yet hundreds would turn up every year, in June, for the annual missionary conference where the imperatives of mission were given out. In 1949, for example, people read in the *Challenger* that the conference was to be staged at Hepburn on June, 5-7, and then at Herbert on June, 9-12. There would be "free accommodation" for those "from a distance." All workers were present to give reports. G. W. Peters came from Fresno as the keynote speaker, and David Wirsche was home on furlough from Colombia. The latter had grown up at Flowing Well, attended the German-English Academy at Rosthern, graduated from BBS, and then from Tabor in 1945. Perhaps in conjunction with the conference, or inspired by it, Nick Willems gave a rhetorical flourish when he wrote in the *KJ* that the boundaries of the "door" opened to the WCM "extended from the very north, where civilization ends, down to the south of Saskatchewan." Here was a large field, where "sin dominates, people satisfy the desires of the flesh which often results in dire poverty. The work is a continual [sic] combat against the powers of darkness."²³

Encouraged by such exuberance, and splendid examples of devoted employment of talents in the small towns of Saskatchewan, and the self-sacrificing leadership of J. H. Epp, especially during 1944-46, and of H. A. Willems at the board level, the young people kept enrolling in Bible schools and going out during summers. As Peters had stated in 1942, if you of our constituency don't give us your young people for Bible school and for summer service, we are lost! In 1967, the staff of Bethany reported that representatives of fifty-five evangelical Bible institutes in Canada had recently met at Three Hills. There it was pointed out "that our mission boards depend almost entirely on the Bible schools to train and prepare missionaries. If our Bible schools close down or should cease to pursue their present objectives, most mission boards would be without missionary candidates." Bethany resolved to press on, and in 1967 received support from the Alberta Conference. Parents were sometimes hard to convince,

but when they saw their children come home "transformed," they renewed their support. And what blessings followed! When Ella Derksen married Isaac Block (Sr.) of Borden they reared a "baker's dozen of Bible school students."²⁴

C. British Columbia

In previous chapters we have brought developments in British Columbia up to about 1940. We dealt with the beginnings of the WCM of British Columbia and the opposition this aroused initially. We also touched on the West Coast in our discussion of the CIM, DVBS, radio outreach, camps, and Bible schools. As we come to the first decade and a half after the war, we have to acknowledge that, just as Saskatchewan's WCM set the pace before the war, so British Columbia's West Coast Childrens' Mission provided the spur after the war. In fact, it may have been the rivalry between the voluntarists and the officials of the Home Missions Committee that heightened the drama of the *Randmission*. Both were working beyond the immediate environs of the home congregations on both sides of the lower Fraser River. Both areas were traversed, explored, and touched by gospel outreach. But the societal organization backed by Hepburn's "empire-building" seemed the stronger of the two movements, until under George Sukkau, the two were brought together formally in 1945. Were they not both cut from the same cloth and advancing the same cause? The chief point, however, was this: both groups laid an initial geographical base for the WCCM through the many contacts made from Vancouver to Hope, on both sides of the mighty Fraser.¹

Congregational Support

Before attention is given to the different areas that were to be developed as stations and churches, it is necessary to look at the organizing model used and the high degree of motivation developed. Though the voluntarists seemed to have taken charge in 1945, this did not mean that only a small segment of the congregational membership was henceforth involved. Quite the opposite was the case. The voluntarists had won over the congregational youth, the Bible schools and high schools. In fact, schools had to be



Laidlaw SS class, early 1950s.
Art Isaac, East Chilliwack, teacher, later Lake Errock and then La Glace.

developed to accommodate and channel the high-spirited West Coast movement.

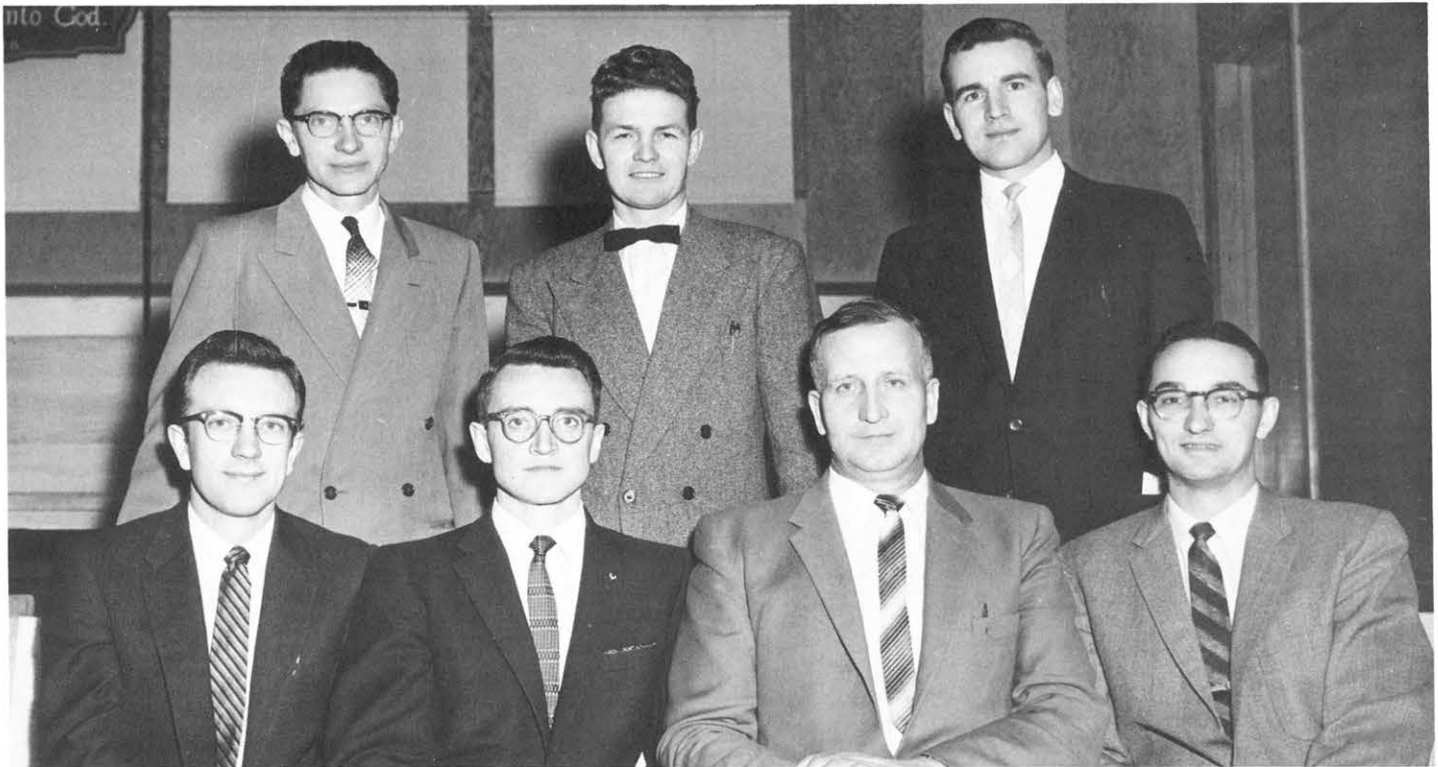
The congregations, some prodded by the examples of others like South Abbotsford, Matsqui, and East Chilliwack, gave initiative and ongoing support to the WCCM, especially in areas within driving range. For example, Henry Warkentin in November 1955 brought forward to the semi-annual meeting of the British Columbia Conference the dozen or so Sunday schools between Vancouver and Hope (162 kilometers), for which congregations were supplying teachers and automobiles. For example East Aldergrove sent teachers to County Line and Brookwood; Matsqui sent workers to McConnell Creek and Silverdale; South Abbotsford to Otter Road and Peardonville; East Chilliwack to Laidlaw and Columbia Valley; and Arnold to Straighton. Some of these developed into mission stations, while others were carried on for years until questions were raised as to where such efforts were going! Warkentin in that year exulted over the seventy-one workers in the field. He named the congregations that had workers going out, and then *those that did not*. Four stations had resident workers; seven couples were receiving partial support. Nevertheless, the main point was that though the effort was large, involving many people, yet the outreach did not pose a great drain on the Conference as such. The situation was quite different from the later church planting era when some people wished that the voluntarist phase had never ended.²

Recognized Influences

How then, was this movement set in motion and kept enthusiastic? We have already emphasized the inner dynamic of mission as exemplified in Acts 1:8; we have listened to Henry Brucks's explanation for the voluntarism inherent in the immigrant situation; we have analyzed motivation in Saskatchewan. In 1955, the British Columbia report on home missions to the Canadian Conference at Coaldale answered the question, What influences bear on our congregational life in British Columbia? The reporter, unnamed, pointed to some negative influences: the competitive spirit created by ambition and consumerism, the greater allure of sin than was the case in earlier decades, the less than desirable influences of non-church schools and even of some Bible schools "strange" to Mennonite Brethren. But positively, he was encouraged by the strength of MBBC's influence brought into the congregations by returning students and graduates. Even more, the blessings of the returning Bible school students from Clearbrook, Hepburn, and Winkler penetrated not only into the congregations, but "into the very life of the family." Nor did the writer omit the Christian high schools, which heightened spiritual life very directly. It is clear that the influences of schools attended by Mennonite Brethren young people had a more powerful impact on the direction of mission than either the home or the congregation.³

Delegates Question Leadership

This movement, once underway, also had highly motivated energetic and self-evaluative leadership. Five brethren directed the WCCM between 1945 and 1962, the year of the name change to Mennonite Brethren Mission of British Columbia. After George Sukkau, three others came



The Board of the WCCM, 1958-59.

Back: John Enns, John Reimer, Jake Friesen. Front: Allen Brandt, George Konrad, Peter Neufeldt, Peter Penner.

from Yarrow: Peter Neufeldt, Herman Lenzmann, and Henry Warkentin; two came from South Abbotsford, John Reimer and Jake H. Friesen. The first two were Winkler graduates; the second two attended Yarrow and Clearbrook, and Jake Friesen attended Clearbrook's MBBI only. Each contributed vision, energy, and change of direction if necessary; each was prepared for self-analysis as time went on.

Such change and self-analysis were sometimes induced by the "heat" that was applied at conferences. Some brethren have always asked critical questions at budget time. The principle enunciated in 1930 that we have always governed ourselves according to the treasury, held true. Having heard the results of the previous years' work, delegates wanted to know whether objectives in the anticipated expansion had been thought out. For example, the budget of the WCCM doubled during John Reimer's directorship (1957-61). Judging from the questions raised, there must have been some members who thought that Reimer and others were too ambitious. There were times, from the layman's point of view, when outreach seemed somewhat unguided. The Conference needed a breather, time to take a second look.

In part this aggressiveness was an inheritance from Saskatchewan where the WCM was international and interdenominational. In 1963 Jack Block pointed out some faulty thinking which could lead to adverse consequences. Just because someone once spotted an empty hall and some children playing outside did not mean that it was the best location for a church, or even a mission! He applied that kind of thinking to McConnell Creek, whose story will be told shortly.⁴

As indicated, at first the outreach seemed concentrated in the Lower Fraser Valley. But before the period had passed, the interior was also penetrated when two fields, Grand Forks and Port Edward, were transferred to the WCCM. The north was penetrated by teachers, settlers, and new colonizers, as we have had occasion to point out. And there was always the temptation to join the "high risk" venture of the one-company town, as in Ocean Falls and Kitimat. As will be shown, church planting in any decade was fairly high risk adventure, as the relatively meager results will demonstrate. Businessmen would have wanted higher returns on their investment.

Vancouver

In the Lower Fraser Valley, it all began in Vancouver. Hence we must look at the urban mission first, including Queensborough. Actually, the Vancouver city mission was supervised at first by the Home Missions Committee and then by a board separate from the WCCM. The Bethania home for girls continued to serve as an employment agency, a transitional reception center, and a place of fellowship until urbanization, modern appliances, and professionalism changed all that. In 1959 Sarah Wiens wrote, "It is not a girls' home like it used to be," when first served by Tina Lepp from about 1934 to 1944. Nevertheless, it still served these functions, as the following series of questions shows: "Is that the Bethlehem home?" "Is that the Bethel Reform School?" "Is that the Mennonite Home?" "Could I have the girl again that I had last time? I don't remember the name. . . . Send me a Christian girl, the girls from the employment office are not trustworthy. . . ."⁵

Meanwhile, in May 1944, C. C. Peters of the Home Missions Committee was still complaining he could not find a worker for the city mission to succeed J. G. Thiessen who had been limiting his outreach to Russian-speaking people. The committee had earlier wanted H. S. Rempel. After looking elsewhere, they found in their own midst the missionary who would give his whole life to the work — Henry G. Classen.



Henry G. Classen, Pacific Grace Mission, with two baptismal candidates, as seen in 1971.

Strangely, though Classen worked for five months in 1944-45, he was not appointed until 1950. A *Russlaender*, he came from Aberdeen, Saskatchewan, where he met his wife, Sara Niessen. He had attended the Coaldale Bible School for two years. Otherwise his education consisted of "books and the school of hard knocks." He first held street meetings in conjunction with the young people of the East Aldergrove Church. His outreach in Vancouver was to Skid Row, where he received permission to preach in the "open



A Street Meeting Scene, Vancouver, 1957. Pacific Grace Mission singing group, led by Henry G. Classen (with hat); to the left of the Indian woman who is reportedly drunk, stands Herb Brandt, behind him the tall and young Jake Balzer.

air" in 1952. This work developed into the Pacific Grace Mission, featuring a growing Sunday school whose staff was supervised by Herbert Brandt. Susie Neufeld served as full-time visitor and teacher, beginning in the late fifties, while Classen directed the mission, supervised the building program,



Vancouver Pacific Grace Mission. Sue Neufeld, long-time SS superintendent, as seen in 1969.

and was featured as the speaker in the radio broadcast "Lighthouse of Hope."⁶

In a number of areas we have had occasion to draw attention to the serious tone that characterized service, for example in Yarrow and Hepburn. In the Pacific Grace Mission workers offering their services were required to tell their conversion story and to give a written promise of regularity, a commitment for a definite period, as well as assurances that they were "standing in fellowship and love with all God's children." In time, this was sophisticated into a six-page "Christian Worker's Standard of Pacific Grace Mission." This came to include references negating charismatic manifestations on the one hand and direct references to "the battle of the hemline" on the other, in the day of the mini-skirt. The work prospered, and Pacific Grace Mission built a chapel at Francis and Woodland in 1957-58. The Mission offered a full range of services, weekly street meetings, a Sunday school with two hundred members, and weekly visitation in many homes in this rougher part of Vancouver. In March 1964, the chapel organized and became a member of the British Columbia Conference. The story of the change in the direction of a rescue mission and the dissolution of what Classen called the "white work" in 1977 must be left to a later section. Suffice it to say, the Classens stayed with Pacific Grace Mission for twenty-five years.⁷

Queensborough

Though Strawberry Hill and Queensborough at the eastern end of Lulu Island were not considered part of Greater Vancouver, they have long since been swallowed up by metropolitan growth. The municipalities of Richmond and Delta now cover the area. In 1942 it must have been quite an adventure for the young Sylvester Dirks to evangelize in Queensborough under the Home Missions Committee's *Randmission*.

For about seven years before 1956, Strawberry Hill Mennonite Brethren Church (later Kennedy Heights) developed the Sunday school, first held in the home of A. H. Toews and led by Nick and John Goertz. A chapel was built in 1954 before a full-time worker was appointed. When Frank (a graduate of MBBI) and Pearl Koop, formerly of Yarrow, came in 1956, they inherited a thriving Sunday school. In the summer they combined resources with John and Eva Esau at County Line to conduct a camp under tents. Many young couples helped on this station, conducting weekday activities as well as Sunday classes.

Just as the Koops resigned from the work, Queensborough and County Line were rapidly developing a Conference identification and affiliation. Once in the Conference and under the supervision of the Home Missions Committee the work seemed to decline. Following a brief stint by Walter Heinrichs in 1962, Vern Ratzlaff commuted from Yarrow with a carload of teachers. When John Esau left Queensborough in 1965 for a fresh start in rescue work in Vancouver proper, problems developed in Queensborough. An interim leader was believed to have "social gospel" ideas (because he had gone to the wrong school!). When he was asked to step down, Walter G. Epp of Strawberry Hill was given charge. It was here that Epp had his apprenticeship for ministry at Dartmouth, Medicine Hat, and Edmonton. Victor Nickel, who came from Carrot River in 1965, was placed on half salary and, following him, under Abe Wieler, the subsidy was removed. Though the church was near dissolution in 1970, mainly because of a population shift, the final resolution did not take place until 1973-74. By that time it was plain that the eastern end of Lulu Island was to be an industrial zone.⁸

Harrison Hot Springs

Turning now to the north side of the Fraser, we must look at Harrison Hot Springs, McConnell Creek, Ruskin, and the congregational outstations. Harrison was actually the first station adopted by the WCCM. John Martens, a graduate of PBI (1942) and his wife Bertha came to Harrison following a year with the Shantyman's Mission. In 1944-45 Martens conducted a Sunday school and received assistance from the WCCM in the building of a manse. British Columbia congregations next gave collections for a chapel which was completed in 1947. The Martens had more success in out-of-station Sunday schools than in Harrison itself, largely because of the fluctuating population of what was essentially a tourist resort. This should have been a warning for future development.

When Martens resigned because of illness, a most energetic replacement came in the person of John Reimer.



Harrison Hot Springs, 1950.
John and Bertha Martens, with Rodney, Raymond, and Sharon, first workers at HHS.

He filled the chapel when he began to transport children. Peter and Betty Boschmann, and other members of the two Chilliwack churches assisted him on Sundays. As a result of conversions and baptisms, the Harrison work was organized as a mission church with twenty-two members. Shantymen, the Matsqui "King's Messengers," and Henry Warkentin of the WCCM were among the many guests.

When the Boschmanns succeeded John and Martha Reimer in 1957, housing again became a problem, but loan monies from the endowment fund were forthcoming for a parsonage. Having won the confidence of Harrison's town fathers, Boschmann was able to participate in the annual programing of the Provincial Recreation Commission, and gained full control of the junior scouting organization. As the work grew, and members, many of them non-Mennonite in origin, became workers themselves, Boschmann began an offender's ministry in the minimum security prison at nearby Agassiz, part of the federal penitentiary system. Walter Heinrichs carried forward the ministry for four years.⁹

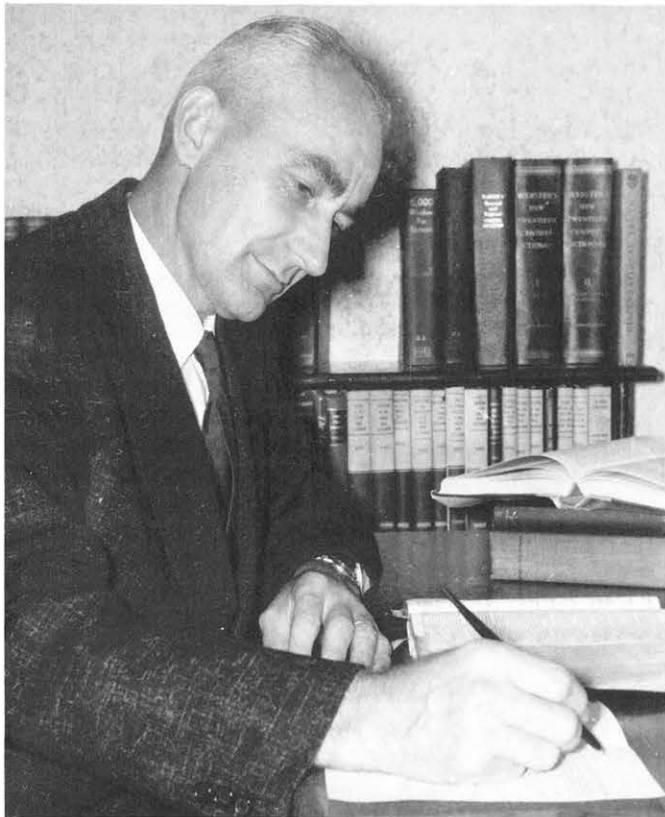
Jake H. Friesen went to Harrison in 1966, having given leadership to the Mission Committee for the past five years. He had supervised the adoption of a new constitution, including the integration of Pacific Grace Mission in Vancouver, and the change of name from WCCM. Under his leadership, Harrison became a full member of the Conference after twenty-five years of persistent effort. To aid him, he invited the Boschman-Messengers team, and Campus Crusade personnel, and used the "Coffee House" ministry for saturation evangelism. A new church was built in Harrison in 1972-73.

John and Martha Reimer, who had long ago built a house in Agassiz, returned in 1979. They had served in Ontario, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan, as will be pointed out. Reimer told the author that if only the first and second chapel had been built in Agassiz, now a growth suburban area, the church would have mushroomed by comparison. He too, because of his experience elsewhere, had become a church planter, and had come to regret the earlier over-emphasis on children. Nevertheless, Harrison is a thriving, self-supporting church, having more than eighty members in 1980.¹⁰

McConnell Creek/Mountain View

McConnell Creek is another work that has continued to this day, albeit not without a split very recently. This area, about twenty kilometers north east of Mission City, early became the responsibility of the Matsqui Church. Frieda Janzen began with DVBS, and others from the church followed her. Cornelius Klassen superintended the Sunday school from 1946 to 1956, during which time the first full-time workers, Nick and Elizabeth Dyck, were appointed. Organized by W. Wiens, the Matsqui church constructed a chapel and dedicated it to WCCM work in August 1953. Prominent among those giving leadership over the years were Peter and Helen Ewert, as well as Bill Klassen with his musical talent.

Nick Dyck had attended both Yarrow and South Abbotsford schools. Following the first baptism of McConnell Creek converts, Dyck hoped to organize a mission church, but organization was postponed because McConnell wanted to take a course different from either of two acceptable options: to join the Mennonite Brethren Conference or to join another



Mc Connell Creek pastor Nick J. Dyck. (1962).

evangelical conference. McConnell seemed intent on organizing as a Gospel chapel, while at the same time receiving the benefit of transferred memberships from Matsqui to the Chapel. This was entirely unconstitutional, as we will see with reference to Oliver. The ministers' and deacons' conference was faced with this question at several locations. Why not have the best of both worlds — chapel membership status raised to an equality with Matsqui Church, and financial dependence on Matsqui and/or the Conference?¹¹

One of the reasons for the desire to be strengthened by memberships from Matsqui was the lack of growth. Shortly after the Dycks left for Abbotsford and were replaced by Herb and Adeline Neufeld, Jack Block raised the question, "Is McConnell Creek Mission Church in the wrong place? At least one couple, the C. Klassens has given ten years of service to the station, and yet the work has not progressed beyond a work among children. Is this the best use that can be made of talent, time and material?" Block asked. He did not think so. Obviously he was in line with some of the thinking then penetrating evangelical churches.

Spurred by this kind of criticism, the Mission, under Jake Friesen, supported the move from the hinterland to the Loughheed Highway closer to the Fraser and to Mission City. Such a move would help in bringing together the fruits of McConnell Creek, Hatzic, and McConnell's outstation, Dewdney, and also Silverdale, where the Matsqui church had a Sunday school. Neufeld, a graduate of East Chilliwack and the Canadian Bible College in Regina, relocated the chapel and renamed it Mountain View Gospel Chapel. The further developments of this congregation under Hartley Smith and Victor Stobbe will be left to a later section.¹²

Ruskin, west of Mission City, became the focus of DVBS outreach in 1943. Such familiar names as Peter F. Ewert, A. J. Stobbe, early directors of the WCM of British Columbia, and Henry Warkentin, later director of WCCM, all worked in the Ruskin Sunday school between 1943 and 1954. Waldo Lepp, then at Yarrow, was the first full-time worker. When he became ill and returned to Saskatchewan, the Mission turned to Aaron Schmidt, home from MBBC in 1954. As it turned out, however, once a person of some persuasiveness such as Schmidt came along and began to move toward chartering a church, it became obvious that a Baptist orientation was strong. Upon the request of the main body of believers, the work and chapel was turned over to a Baptist conference. While Schmidt was embarrassed at leaving a work so soon in his first assignment, nevertheless, he felt a clear call to go to Terrace where he was the first WCCM worker.¹³

Otter Road

When we move to the south of the river, we come closer to the supporting congregations and their many outreach points. Whereas the South Abbotsforders in the thirties tended to go north of the river, the Yarrowers stayed on the south side. This generalization was not true, however, with reference to the South Otter station, southwest of Aldergrove. It was here that the WCM of British Columbia had its first all-year Sunday school and superintended it for several years until John Enns took over that responsibility. From 1944 to 1951 it was conducted in the home of Mrs. Anderlini. George Konrad, Calvin and Leslie Buehler, Elmer and Verna Warkentin (siblings), and Jake Friesen had their beginnings in Christian service at Otter Road. George Konrad, with his wife, Tina, came back for one year in 1958-59. They were succeeded by Jake and Katie Neufeld, their first long-term appointment.

Neufeld had studied at Eden Christian College, WBS, and MBBC. He benefited from the dedicated and consistent application for more than a decade of the large teaching staff from South Abbotsford. A second chapel was completed during his tenure there, as South Otter became a mission church.

Under the next incumbent, Victor Stobbe, South Otter joined the Conference. Calvin Buehler, who came south from Vanderhoof in 1967, brought the church to a self-supporting position. The writer, who was a participant in the inauguration of this church in 1959, commented on the development as follows:

The development from the small beginnings [such as this] has not been phenomenal. But neither can this be expected in a work of this nature, for people in such communities cannot be hurried into a genuine decision to follow Christ, nor has there been a desire on the part of the workers to witness only a fleeting emotional upheaval for the sake of numbers and a thrilling report for the conference delegates. The seed of the Gospel usually germinates slowly under the regular application of the "water of the Word."

Unlike so many stations inaugurated during this period that did not succeed, South Otter built up slowly, afforded itself a new church in 1980, and welcomed a new pastoral couple, Carl and Debbie Bracewell, from Fort St. John.¹⁴



Otter Road, B.C., 1959.
Jake and Katie Neufeld, with Daniel.

County Line

Unlike Otter Road, County Line did not continue with the Mennonite Brethren after a thirty-year association. Abe J. Sawatsky from Yarrow, first took over this work from a Baptist group in 1948. He was succeeded by John Guenther from Clearbrook two years later. In 1951, the East Aldergrove congregation assumed the sponsorship, a relationship that continued until County Line became an affiliate of the Conference. First the church built a chapel for the Sunday school operated by Calvin Buehler. John and Eva Esau worked hard to come to grips with this relatively poor district of about 350 homes within eight square miles. Only 40 percent attended church. In late 1956, A. H. Wieler served as evangelist in order to reach the unchurched. This and the follow-up was successful enough to contemplate the formation of a mission church. To this end John Esau, a graduate of MBBI, was ordained, and County Line was accepted as a member church. In British Columbia this was considered a milestone, "the realization of one of the basic aims of the Mission: to see the establishment of indigenous churches" that had developed out of children's work.

But County Line's troubles were not over. There were population shifts, zoning changes, and financial difficulties. Nevertheless, this development gave general satisfaction at the time. When Queensborough also followed in this path, the Conference voted (on the basis of a canvas in the churches) to transfer the supervision and financial support of these new churches to the Committee of Reference and Counsel.

In 1962 George and Edith Penner came from Prince George to take charge of County Line. They worked diligently, but found that by and large it remained a children's work. At one point some consideration was given to a merger with Otter Road, but that was not feasible at the time. County Line then seemed to fade from the scene until it was clear in 1979 that Penner had made the church nondenominational. The CRC, having studied the matter, agreed to the transfer as requested. Penner was able to buy the property at twenty-eight thousand dollars, 60 percent of its appraised value. Happily for the East Aldergrove membership, their other extension Sunday school at Brookwood, started about 1957, turned out better for the Conference in that it became the South Langley Church. That story will be given later.¹⁵



County Line Chapel, B.C. (late 1950s).
This picture is indicative of the supporting groups in B.C. Helping John Esau, back row, center, is Rudy Boschman. To the left of Esau stands the young Rudy Hamm, and to his left David Loewen, the future director of Camp Arnes. The YP were from Yarrow mostly.

Laidlaw and Other Extensions

A number of congregations conducted weekly Sunday schools in small towns and villages south of the Fraser. One of these was East Chilliwack's extension at Laidlaw, a Catholic community about ten miles west of Hope. A Mrs. Wiley began the Sunday school and then made contact with the WCCM in 1945. As a result, East Chilliwack young people took over her work in 1946, at first using the St. Elmo school.

Though Laidlaw never seems to have reached the stage where it was felt the Mission should assume responsibility, it proved interesting because of the many who began their Christian service here: Herbert Brandt, Henry Born, Wilma Wiebe (Mrs. Elmer Stobbe), Rudy Hamm, Don Kornelson. Art Isaac, who supervised the Sunday school for three years, then went on to Lake Errock and La Glace.

There were other congregational extension Sunday schools. Vancouver had one at Mitchell Island where half the children were of Hindu parentage. Some of these had been steered to Mitchell Island when the "Hindumission" at Pacific Grace Mission could not mix whites and South Asians in one school. Yarrow youth worked at Bridal Falls and Pump Town; Arnold youth at Straighton; and Black Creek youth at Campbell River on Vancouver Island.¹⁶

Oliver

Moving to the "interior," as it is called, one reaches Oliver via the Hope-Princeton Highway. Oliver had some Mennonite Brethren families, some Anglo-Saxons, and a few of Russian background, whereas Grand Forks was the commercial center of a large community of Doukhobors,

among them members of the Sons of Freedom sect. Oliver's Mennonite Brethren families early affiliated with the Kelowna Church, and the latter's congregation felt responsible as a mother congregation. Nevertheless, for assistance in baptismal services and DVBS, Oliver turned gradually to the Home Missions Committee and then to the WCCM. Kelowna wanted Oliver to have church status in 1948, but this did not materialize because of internal difficulties which cropped up every so often.

Having purchased an unused Lutheran church situated just outside Oliver, the group welcomed visits from Henry Unger of Greendale. Then in 1950 the WCCM accepted Oliver as an extension church and sent Jake and Justina Froese there. The baptized members, however, remained affiliated with Kelowna. During Froese's ministry, morning services were still conducted in German. Only the evening services for young people were held entirely in English. Froese eventually transferred both the Sunday school and youth work to town, using the Elks' hall, and began an outreach in Osoyoos also.



John E. Klassen family gave 10 years to Oliver. (1958).
Joyce, John E., Les, Loreen, Loena & Carolyn (in lap).

When the Froeses left for Calgary in 1953, John E. and Leona Klassen came from Matsqui. The first priority with Klassen was to find a new meeting place in town where school and church could be held at one place. He acquired an unfinished chapel, begun by a Pentecostal group, completed the building, and sold the Lutheran church. The new facility was dedicated on March 4, 1956, and John Klassen was ordained in June. The work seemed to grow. In the fall of 1959, Klassen reported a total of eighteen conversions during the previous year as a result of evangelism, DVBS, and the build-up of youth work.

The Klassens left after ten years, to be replaced by Peter and Agnes Penner from Arnold, the parents of George and Sam, whose story appears on these pages. Though the Penners were first appointed in 1962, they did not take up residence until June 1963. By that time a split had occurred. Apparently some Mennonite Brethren affiliated with Kelowna would not pay their Conference dues, and the Conference had to absorb this cost, about \$360. The resolution of this difficulty was the organization of a Mennonite



Oliver, B.C. 1967.
Peter C. Penner baptizing Keith Elaisan, Luise Dyck, Phyllis, Linda, and Caroline Elaisan.

Brethren church at Oliver distinct from Kelowna, under the new leadership of P. C. Penner, who gained the adherence of thirteen members.

In spite of the best intentions, the work remained small and, when the MBM/BC began to apply indigenization policies in earnest during Helmut Klassen's time, it was felt that support should be withdrawn. There were simply too many small evangelical groups in such a small place. Faced with this decision, the Oliver Church decided to dissolve. This was not, however, the end of Mennonite witness there because Klassen stayed on, supporting himself, to shepherd a small United Mennonite group. Helmut is the son of Dietrich Klassen of Virgil who once itinerated in the Canadian Conference with Henry H. Janzen.¹⁷

Grand Forks

As to Grand Forks, we had occasion to show how and when this work was given to the WCCM in 1958, along with Port Edward. Despite all the administrative changes outlined earlier, George and Erna Martens remained as the pastoral couple until 1982. They remained in contact with the Jacob Reimers who had lived among Doukhobors at Winlaw, north of Castlegar, since the 1940s. Reimer and Martens both attended the Russian Bible Institute and supported themselves as missionaries. Martens argues that this was necessary as the Doukhobors (*doukhobortsy* — spirit wrestlers) were more suspicious of white-collar preachers than most people. Much patience was required, as Martens never tired of explaining. The Conference took heed, and the WCCM assisted with the construction of a chapel in 1955. Various people encouraged the Martens by a visit or in response to an invitation to serve.

The work was hard, as the Doukhobors have their peculiar imperviousness to the gospel, as noted with reference to Blaine Lake. Martens was criticized at one point for stating that the "Doukhobors as such will have to be dealt with by the government." He meant, of course, the Sons of Freedom who alone were responsible for the



Grand Forks, B.C. (1959).
George and Erna Martens, pastoral couple, 1948-1983.

burnings and nudity that erupted occasionally. He did not expect that they would all be saved as a group any more than Pankratz could have expected the Jews to be converted. Yet Martens and his dedicated congregation persisted and, in time, their patience paid off. In 1968, he could report that some of the "radical sect of the Sons of Freedom had become sons of God." He called his church board a veritable league of nations, as seven denominational backgrounds were represented. In 1975, the Grand Forks chapel with its twenty-nine members was brought into the Conference. Not surprisingly, when the Martens retired in 1982 after thirty-five years of residence and witnessing, they and three members of the family stayed in Grand Forks. He hoped his contacts built up over so many years would open doors of witnessing.¹⁸

"The True North"

As the writer knows only too well, to take public transportation or a car to "the North," to the Nechako valley and Skeena River country, was still an adventure in the late 1950s. To take the gospel was no less an adventure. From east to west along Route 16, "the Yellowhead," lay Vanderhoof, Hazelton, Terrace, Port Edward, and Kitimat, each of which became an outreach post in the 1950s. Kitimat forms a special category, as it was a one-company town that mushroomed and then collapsed somewhat.

Today, none of these stations except Port Edward are listed among British Columbia congregations. This work has been merged with a new work in Prince Rupert. The thrust to the Nechako and Skeena country seems to have been ephemeral. Vanderhoof was turned over to the Associated Gospel Church; Hazelton went nondenominational in 1975; the Terrace situation resembled Oliver's; and Port Edward no longer fits today's church planting philosophy. That is not to say that the whole effort was a waste of money, personnel and time. There is however a new rationalization for transfers to other churches today. In any case, the individual story is interesting and instructive for our generation as such and for Mennonite Brethren missiology in particular.¹⁹

Vanderhoof, as indicated in chapter one, was the scene of Mennonite Brethren activity in 1918 because the Heinrich Voth family, accompanied by others, moved to Braeside, west of Vanderhoof, in order to turn a draft evasion into a productive colonization. The experiment failed; Vanderhoof was not ready; the North was too underdeveloped. Mennonites came again in 1942; thirty families in forty-two railway cars of settlers' effects, "from a dried-out distress area in Saskatchewan," especially from Hague-Osler. They were mainly *Sommerfelder* and Old Colony Mennonites.

To this scene came summer Bible school teachers in 1948 and every summer until, in 1953, Calvin and Tillie Buehler settled there. They stayed until 1967, remaining with their flock even though in 1963 it determined to leave the Mennonite Brethren association. The work grew rapidly, and most of the members and adherents were Mennonites of *Sommerfelder* background. Buehler told *KJ* readers in 1956,

When we first came here to live, we hardly dared to hope that within three short years we would have a place of worship filled with regular worshippers, a Sunday school and an active group of believers eager to reach out to those who are still without Christ, yet that is what the Lord has done.²⁰



Vanderhoof, B.C., 1959-60.
Tillie and Calvin Buehler, with Bevin and Ruth.

Buehler, a graduate of PBI but ordained by the Mennonite Brethren in 1955, at first supported himself by working in a sawmill. The language used was a mixture of Low German and English until English prevailed. Each summer the WCCM sent DVBS teachers. Couples like the Neil Klassens and Abe Klassens felt called to work there as teachers. The writer was himself witness to a large fellowship gathering on the banks of the Nechako in 1959. The Sunday morning services were overflowing and the Sunday school very large. After the Buehlers had conducted three baptisms by immersion, they had to extend the chapel, which was crowded to the doors as the early sixties came. At Vanderhoof, everyone went to Sunday school and church. Hence, it was a let down to learn that in October 1962 this church, faced with the decision of affiliation, decided to join the Associated Gospel Church. A request to the Mission, signed by James A. Griffith,

Neil Klassen, and Johnny Martens, dated November 14, 1962, read as follows:

In view of the recent change of name from the West Coast Children's Mission, to the Mennonite Brethren Mission of B.C., and the stigma that the name "Mennonite" has in our area, the group of believers fellowshipping at the Gospel Chapel in Vanderhoof feel that we cannot go along with this change. Therefore we would ask that the Mennonite Brethren Conference be kind enough to release us to seek affiliation with the Associated Gospel Churches.

We are mindful of the fact that through the efforts and support of the Mennonite Brethren Conference many of us have come to know Christ as Savior and we have received spiritual nurture, leadership and encouragement in the work of the Lord. We remain indebted [sic] to you and eternity will have its [sic] reward for all who so sacrificially gave and prayed that we might hear the gospel. The simple words, "Thank You!" seem so inadequate to express our feeling, but let us assure you, we say them with all sincerity.

We trust that wherever possible our fellowship will continue as we unitedly labor in His vineyard.²¹

What was the explanation for this? What was the stigma of the name Mennonite? J. H. Friesen explained that some *Sommerfelder* had left to join a new incoming (Old) Mennonite group. Others had left for economic reasons. Still the morning attendance was holding at about two hundred. Are we to believe that, had the name of the Mission not been changed, this group would eventually have become Mennonite Brethren? There was a core who had been baptized by immersion. The stigma seems to echo reactions in the *Doerfermission* and *Zeltmission* we saw earlier in Manitoba. Obviously, it was not alone the issue of baptism by immersion. It could hardly have been the doctrine of non-resistance, which Buehler would have played down anyway. Was it the high ethical standards of life, Mennonite Brethren unworldliness? Or were the Mennonite Brethren structures all that much more to be feared than Associated Gospel structures?

Knowing that all this happened, and knowing of the generosity of the Buehlers in staying to help with the transitional years, it was rather startling to hear in 1982 that some of the persons dissatisfied twenty years ago were now equally dissatisfied with the Associated Gospel structures. It was pleasant to hear that Calvin Buehler's reputation stood head and shoulders over those who have succeeded him. The most surprising sequel to this is the knowledge that those who left in 1962 would now feel at home in the Mennonite Brethren church because it has "changed so much." Since the author's visit to Vanderhoof in 1982, a group has made a new start with the Mennonite Brethren Conference.²²

Hazelton

New Hazelton experienced the benefit of colonization when in 1949 two couples moved there for the purpose of relating the gospel to the community. These were the John F. Kornelsons and the George Stobbes. Both couples were self-employed. The WCCM assisted with the construction of

a chapel, dedicated in 1952, George and Rose Braun joined them in that year. Rose was the daughter of John A. Harder of Yarrow. Both had studied in Fraser Valley Bible schools and George left the field to study at MBBC for a year.

Periodically they were assisted by teachers employed in the area. For example, David Epp, who appears in these pages, taught in the Indian village of Kispiox, and Helmut Schroeder taught in several other similar villages. Though the Brauns were sorely missed when they took the Kitimat assignment for two years (1958-60), the work grew and, once the Brauns had returned, the Hazelton Gospel Chapel was organized as a Mennonite Brethren church in 1962. Unfortunately, just as affiliation had been completed, the senior Kornelsons had to leave for health reasons, and others departed also. In 1963, Braun appealed for help, challenging teachers particularly to come north to teach in Indian villages. Albert Dueck, as recently as the previous year, had managed to bring two converted Indian youths to MBBI, Clearbrook, for Bible studies. At the June conference Rudy Janzen stated,



Hazelton. 1959.

Back: G. Stobbe, Otto Rast, John Kornelson, Albert Bennett.
Front: Justina Penner, Mrs. Rast, Mrs. Stobbe, Mrs. Kornelson.
Children: R. G. Penner, & the Rast children.

On a church level the Hazelton situation continues to give everyone concerned much reason for 'second thoughts' and 'soul-searching' before the Lord. Br. George Braun's timely appeal at the last Conference session still rings in our ears and pricks our consciences, and we earnestly cry out the question as to why there are so few Christians willing to dedicate their vocational pursuits in such needy areas of outreach. Teachers especially, besides tradesmen, are needed to form a healthy nucleus for that dwindling church membership.²³

The Tom Loewens, prevented from going to Borneo, were prepared with J. H. Friesen to "probe" into work among Indians, beginning contacts around Hazelton and Terrace. Even without this response to the earlier appeal, the work grew by persistent involvement in the community. Self-reliance has literally paid off. The membership of about

twenty-five in 1975 averaged donations of \$175 per member for the Conference mission program.

In spite of this matter of praise at the Conference level, and the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of this church, its members decided to withdraw from the Conference "to become a non-denominational church," with the condition that a fellowship tie with the Mennonite Brethren Church be retained. New Hazelton now has "observer status" in the British Columbia Conference.²⁴

Terrace

Further west lies Terrace, a town that created great interest in the 1950s. Mennonites moved there first in 1950 and soon began to fellowship in tandem: Mennonite Brethren, United Mennonite, and Evangelical Mennonite Brethren, as well as evangelicals of other persuasions. On the surface, this group managed well enough under lay leadership. They, however, wanted a full-time pastor from the WCCM. Aaron and Kathren Schmidt were sent in response. Schmidt wrote in 1982, "Terrace was a Gospel Chapel where about eight denominational backgrounds worked together. We promised them that it would never become Mennonite Brethren. Or as Frank Epp wrote, "it was to be an alliance of evangelical Christians."



Terrace. 1958.
Aaron Schmidt, Indian convert, Mrs. Mitchell (who donated her camp for DVBS).

Perhaps because Mennonite Brethren were in the majority, some assumptions were being made when the issue of organization came up. Epp was told in 1973 that Terrace "was already on the map of Mennonite Brethren mission stations before the people of Terrace were aware of what was happening." What actually happened in 1955-56 was that official control was wrested from the hands of George Peters and Menno Buller, two brethren who never worked together well, and given to the WCCM worker. A WCCM mission church was organized in 1956 with twenty-five members. While Aaron Schmidt tried to keep his private promise that the issue of full Mennonite Brethren membership requiring baptism by immersion would not be forced, he became involved in giving birth to a new work in Kitimat, and consequently moved there in 1960. This left the field to Jake Friesen who

had found employment in Terrace as a social worker. In a vote regarding affiliation taken in May 1961 no group had a two-thirds majority. In fact, the Associated Gospel Church received more votes than the Mennonite Brethren.²⁵



Terrace M.B. group, chartered 1962.
Seated: Mr. and Mrs. Bob Jackson, Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Toews, Mrs. and George Peters.
Standing: Alvin and Irma Penner, pastoral couple, Jean and Peter Toews, Mr. and Mrs. Art Parker, Art and Margaret Penner, Jake and Helena Martens.

When Norman and Mary Fehr came in November 1961 they were faced with a split. At the annual business meeting in January, a brother under discipline (involving bankruptcy proceedings) was made assistant to the pastor. "We may have to withdraw WCCM support if Terrace Gospel Chapel does not act," Fehr wrote to Friesen (then field director) on January 23, 1962. Fehr was certain some would withdraw and ask for continuing WCCM assistance. The conclusion to very tension-filled negotiations was that support was withdrawn in April 1962. With the help of Alvin Penner from Saskatchewan, the Terrace Mennonite Brethren Church was organized in 1963, while the chapel group went into the Alliance church, not the Associated Gospel. Though Reuben Epp, a member of the latter, criticized the Mission for damage done to Christian witness by the way the affair was handled, Jake Friesen was convinced that the longstanding "inner disunity" within the chapel "was greater than the disunity between the two groups." Hence, the division proved to be the lesser of two evils, so to speak.

Under Penner's ministry, the building was enlarged and consolidation emphasized; in John Balzer's time evangelism was stressed. J. J. Toews, Bob Roxburgh, and Herb Neufeld were among the evangelists used. When the Terrace church turned to lay leadership in the 1970s, it began with just over twenty members, a figure that has since doubled. As Frank Epp wrote, had all the Mennonites stayed together, the Terrace congregation would have been the largest in that town. As it is, in so many other places as well, the Baptist, Alliance, Pentecostal, and Evangelical Free churches are filled with ex-Mennonites. Today, perhaps, we have to ask not whether Schmidt's promise of 1960 was mistaken, but rather whether he did not in fact have the right missiological idea, something developed since then. Of course, the decision by the General Conference Mennonites and Mennonite Brethren in 1963 regarding baptism helped a great deal.²⁶

Port Edward

Port Edward came to pose a unique problem. That was where the Mennonite Brethren were most directly involved in outreach to native Canadians. Jake and Elsie Bergen had tried until 1958 to bring together Japanese and Indians in one congregation. Both were mainly employed as fishermen and cannery workers. When John and Janice Goertz moved to Port Edward in 1959, their first report stated they were ministering "to Japanese, the Natives, and the western white people." This mixed culture created many difficult problems. Each "steered away from the other," thus making it virtually impossible to have any "gratifying attendance of each social group" in any joint meeting. Besides, the fisheries were having a bad year, and Goertz predicted many would be on welfare.



Port Edward, B.C.
Janice & John P. Goertz. c. 1962.
With the Wrights, an Indian couple.

The problem with converts was of course complicated by the fact that the Anglican diocese had a prior claim on them. In one case, Judy, a convert while Goertz was there, but who then attended Anglican confirmation classes, had to make a clear choice between being an Anglican or a Mennonite. She chose the second. There were other conversions reported during this period. It became exciting when some MBBI students came on tour and stayed to help with DVBS, and Goertz led in organizing a church. But the concern about how to reach three socially distinct groups in one church remained. This problem was only partly relieved when the Japanese population decreased and the Indian population increased during John and Erna Schmidt's time (1964-67). By this time, half of Port Edward's members were living in Prince Rupert and some were thinking of starting a church there.²⁷

The real issue — how to reach across the cultural gulf to native Canadians — was not really faced until George L. Braun asked anthropologist J. A. Loewen to advise the Port Edward Church, and the Mission as such, in this difficult matter. Too long had "western white men" assumed a cultural superiority that essentially disqualified them from effective ministry to Indian peoples. In December 1969, Loewen and Braun did a thorough survey of the area — up to Kincolith where John and Gertrude Froese once worked — interviewing Indian leaders and Anglican clergymen. As

a result the Port Edward members got an enlightened and expert perspective on their mission and its potential for success or failure.

Loewen's "Observations on Church Outreach to Canadian Indians in the Ness-Skeena Areas of British Columbia" were interpreted by Braun to mean, essentially, that Mennonite Brethren were not qualified to work effectively among Indians. He stated, "Dr. Loewen feels that it will be extremely difficult to establish a strong work in Port Edward among the native population *without relating to them in their villages*" (emphasis added). The decision reached then was that the Harbour of Hope Chapel should minister to the "general population" of the area. At the same time, the Conference would support the work of the North American Indian Mission among Indians. While the witness at Port Edward continues, largely through the long-term commitment of Mrs. Gladys Blyth and Anne Neufeld, many members have joined the Prince Rupert Community Chapel formed under the leadership of Menno Friesen in 1980.²⁸

Kitimat

Having reached the West Coast at the mouth of the Skeena River, we must look at two situations, Kitimat, the aluminum city that sprang up, and further south, Ocean Falls, virtually owned by Crown Zellerbach Paper Company. Kitimat is one of those artful Indian names that was given to a mushrooming city built by the Aluminum Company of Canada at great cost and with colossal engineering skills required. As might be expected, some Mennonite Brethren teachers took the opportunity to swell the burgeoning population, which reached about fifteen thousand by 1957. It was believed soon after that if they were not to be lost to the Baptists, quick action was needed in forming a church. Would matters have turned out differently if a Mennonite Brethren church had been planted immediately in 1956, instead of a mission church under George and Rose Braun two years later?

Obviously, no one was ready for church-planting on that scale then, though Braun urged the construction of an adequate building with a future in mind, in 1960. He did not want to lose what had been built up, even though by then there was already a downturn in aluminum production. If they "acknowledged defeat, this would mean that Kitimat would be left without a living example of what true Christian discipleship means."

Urged by Braun, John Reimer moved Aaron Schmidt from Terrace to Kitimat in 1960, while the Brauns returned to Hazelton. Schmidt almost immediately acceded to the demand to have a Mennonite Brethren church in Kitimat, and in 1961 his group hosted the Sunday school convention for teachers from points along Route 16 and invited George Konrad as speaker.

Unfortunately, the Schmidts witnessed a drastic downturn when Kitimat's population was cut in half from five years earlier. While the departure of the Art Penners for Terrace hurt, what bothered Schmidt more was the seeming inability of resident Mennonite Brethren to reach out to the community around them. "It seems that wherever we go, and often without wanting to, we form a clique and are not able to make the people feel at home in our midst. Gradually the truth is dawning on us that our problem is not basically a problem of language — it lies deeper than

that." There was the issue of baptism. George Neumann, a teacher at Kitimat, was glad that the General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches had acted to accept believers baptized upon their faith by modes other than immersion, but he resented the second-class status created for those accepted in that way. They were still not "full members." That was a problem deeper than language indeed.²⁹

When all was said and done, and the Schmidts had turned to self-employment, the Kitimat group decided to dissolve, effective June 4, 1967, and to join a nearby Baptist church. According to some observers, this made good sense. Others did not see it that way. Laurena Block, one of the early Mennonite Brethren teachers, explained in 1971 that most Mennonite Brethren were still there, all had Bible school training, and they were using it to good effect. The fact that Kitimat, with the help of a new paper plant in 1970, grew back to its former size does give the historian concern about some hasty decisions of the past. Compare the patience and persistence in Grand Forks.³⁰

Ocean Falls

Another high risk venture was that undertaken by John Reimer in 1958 when he undertook to supply workers for a small group of evangelicals in Ocean Falls. They had been there since about 1940, in this small town snuggled into the mountainside in one of the many inlets north of Vancouver and Squamish. The only access was by sea or air.

The first workers were Jake and Mary Geddert, from Chilliwack, who had helped the mission at Port Edward and Harrison Hot Springs. They began with a Sunday school in the home of the Obst family. The first believers prepared for affiliation were accepted into Ocean Falls's mother church, Chilliwack Broadway, when Isaac Tiessen was pastor. Finding a lot for a building was difficult because Crown Zellerbach hesitated in the matter. Nevertheless, a chapel was constructed by John Enns and a church organized as the Gospel Fellowship Chapel in 1960-61.



DVBS, Ocean Falls, 1958.
Jake Geddert, pastor, Lillian Stobbe, Kathy Toews, Frieda Ost, Mary Geddert.

There were some remarkable conversions during the Gedderts' time, also when Tom Loewen replaced them in 1961. For example, Ken Taylor of Abbotsford, a nineteen-

year-old of United Church background, found work in Ocean Falls. There he underwent a thorough-going conversion. Having been baptized, he went to Prairie Bible Institute for Bible studies.

The next incumbents, John and Bertha Balzer, felt the pressure of diminishing activity in the paper plant. The upshot of it was that Crown Zellerbach closed down its operation, effective March 1973, and the gospel work was disrupted as people scattered from the scene. Neil Klassen from Aldergrove, who assisted between 1966 and 1971, explained to the Conference how the property had become a "write off."³¹

Where Is the Real Church?

As might be expected, given the expense and the anxiety of achieving results in such isolated places, to satisfy dues-paying delegates, there was considerable re-evaluation underway. Beginning in 1958, in a process that did not end until 1963, the WCCM undertook a self-study. These strategy sessions placed the British Columbia Conference on the threshold of church-planting, but there was still no general adoption of the new missiology.

The study commission (appointed during the early part of 1958) reported in the fall of 1958 under the chairmanship of P. R. Toews, then at Fraserview. It recommended first a change in name to the Mennonite Brethren Mission of British Columbia. After all, the Mission had long since ceased to be a childrens' mission only and certainly was not "interdenominational." (Saskatchewan brethren had rationalized this a few years earlier.) Sponsorship and identification was to be clarified at the outset, nor could a worker henceforth promise a group it would never have to face Mennonite Brethren affiliation. If it wanted the advantages of affiliation — such as administrative centralization and financial assistance — the group would have to accept Conference terms. Hence, a mission group would have either to organize according to the new terms or join another denomination. The Mission would be prepared, however, to help either way.

The study commission had no sooner recommended a new name and constitution to cover all aspects of the work when brethren began to ask, why are we not more successful in forming Mennonite Brethren churches from this enormous effort? They quoted the statistics: 1800 children in Sunday schools and clubs, 170 teachers active, 121 converts in 1958-59, and 15 baptized. They were more impatient than George Martens wanted them to be. Everyone recognized that forming churches where there were 31 different denominational backgrounds was more difficult than among those solely of Mennonite Brethren background, but there was a question of a more searching nature that got a good airing in 1968. Aaron Schmidt at Terrace and Nick Dyck at McConnel Creek raised the question of the "integration of younger churches." Schmidt was concerned about the groups in Vanderhoof, Terrace, Kitimat: how could a mission group, as defined by Mennonite Brethren polity, be a church in a New Testament sense? Was there too much concern for constitutionality within the Mennonite Brethren fortress? Could a mission become a church without all those intermediate steps envisioned in the period from 1945 to about 1952?

Dyck said: "Let us cease to refer to the Doctrines of the Mennonite Brethren Church." He wanted to apply the "doctrines of the Bible as they are held by the Mennonite

Brethren Church” (emphasis added). There was only one problem with that, as Schmidt’s statement implied. It was precisely the Mennonite Brethren polity that was supposedly based on the New Testament that posed the obstacle to integration.

While Schmidt and Dyck were not speaking at cross purposes, and there is no record that the differences were even recognized or discussed, Dyck nevertheless asked a pertinent question, one also raised by Schmidt at Kitimat, as noted. “We have integrated as far as economics, education, and culture (to some extent) is concerned. Why not integrate socially? We must have the friends across the street into our homes . . . and into our hearts. Jesus did.” He believed that “the minds of the citizens of our communities are filled with prejudices because of our segregation practices.”

Schmidt, on the other hand, observed that plain inertia (the indisposition to motion or change in direction) was a far greater obstacle among evangelicals generally than among the Mennonite Brethren, and that the latter were far more ready to assimilate with others than other evangelicals with them. He could not see from the New Testament why, if people had been baptized “upon their faith and are leading exemplary Christian lives” they should be asked to be rebaptized. He believed that undue pressure to organize as a Mennonite Brethren church was very wrong and could be “used by the Enemy.”³²

The challenge of integration proved complex. Wieler of the new Mission reported that “the Board has encountered rather complex problems, difficult to resolve. Various factors have entered in, the basic one being a lack of clearly defined objectives at the very outset of the work.” This was one of the primary lessons learned from the experiences encountered in the north. The rules for affiliation would have to be made clear from the outset. Motive and methods might have been commendable, but it was seen as unfair to change the rules midstream. This appears to have been one of the objections in places like Vanderhoof and especially Terrace.

P. R. Toews’s report in June 1963 made clear that closer contact and improved communications were to be considered in order to promote understanding and avoid the disappointments and embarrassments of the past decade. A year later, Rudy Janzen stated, “Much thought and study is being given to the entire topic of organizing churches — including the organization of extension Sunday schools. A detailed re-evaluation with leading brethren of our Conference is being conducted at this time.”³³

D. Alberta

Of all the provinces, Alberta appears to have attempted and achieved less than other provincial Conference jurisdictions. Certainly it is true for the post-war period. The reader needs to keep in mind, however, that Alberta had just under a thousand members, only slightly more than South Saskatchewan. In 1959, while the latter’s membership had gone down slightly, Alberta’s had risen slightly to 1,174. The membership ratio with the other provincial districts was as follows: North Saskatchewan 1½, Ontario 2, Manitoba 3, and British Columbia 4. This disparity in membership notwithstanding, Alberta brethren would not want the historian to make demographic excuses for lack of effort in mission.

Actually, someone assigned to index the *Protokolle* (Minutes) of Alberta Conference gatherings between 1928 and 1962 has made it relatively easy to locate references to mission activity, and to discover what Alberta brethren classified under that name. Among those are the innermost mission as distinct from *Randmission*, though the latter term is not used before 1950. The “Girls’ Home” and *Kindermision*, colportage, city missions, mission groups, and foreign missions are listed. Concern for colportage goes back to 1935. A home for girls in Calgary goes back to 1936, and DVBS to 1941. Thus, many Albertans had a profound understanding what mission is. For example, A. A. Toews from Namaka, east of Calgary, stated in 1943,



Early Alberta DVBS, late 1940s.
Jake P. Doerksen, later Alta. conference leader, and George Thiessen.

We understand mission to be all that we do under the Lord’s command to rescue the lost and to edify spiritually those who have life-giving faith. Home mission is what we do to ameliorate physical and spiritual distress within and without the church in our own country first and beyond its borders. . . .

To be successful in that mission, we must first give the closest attention to the innermost mission (*die innerste Mission*), and that is, keeping watch over our souls, so that they will not suffer any mischief.

We may assume that the innermost mission was given constant and close attention. What Toews designated “home mission” carried the connotation of welfare concerns generated by the war, while his general term *Mission*, will have encompassed outreach: *Randmission* and *Kindermision*.¹

“The High North”

Given the demographic fact that Mennonites, including Mennonite Brethren, had settled widely in the province by this time, it is not surprising that Alberta brethren at the center, Coaldale, while itinerating among their own congregations in the Peace River area, would become acquainted

with the needs of the Old Colony Mennonites, as well as with German-speaking Lutherans northwest of Edmonton. Hence, Bernard Sawatsky, a Winkler graduate and Coaldale Bible school teacher, was sent north to evangelize and do colportage among these people. He soon discovered that the Baptists and Pentecostals had been there before him. In 1945 a move was made to combine the responsibility for outreach among children and evangelism in the north under one provincial committee. Henry J. Nickel, J. A. Toews (son of A. A.), and J. Willms were elected to what was called the "North-West Childrens' Mission." This new mission as constituted would of course report to the provincial Home Mission Committee which overlapped with provincial executive leadership and controlled the budget. In that year the entire provincial income amounted to \$4,638.32, of which \$3,385.00 was devoted to the innermost mission.²

Leaving the childrens' aspect for the moment, we must pursue the outreach to Old Colony people, as this corresponded to similar efforts in Manitoba. Bernard Sawatsky went to Fort Vermilion where he found about fifty families recently returned from Mexico, and some from Saskatchewan. He found them in acute economic distress. Nevertheless, they had built their own schools and had a firm church order in place. While Sawatsky was impressed with the "pure evangelicalism" of their sermons, he reported: "I found among them a strong tendency toward the traditional and a firm resistance to everything new or about which they were ill-informed. This fact will make mission among them quite impossible." All he achieved in concrete form was permission to distribute some New Testaments to children in their classes. He thought that colportage was the only possible method that might be employed. Almost any other contact would be opposed except perhaps a teacher who would be willing to fill a vacancy and adjust to the requirements of the situation.

This report seems to have discouraged the brethren. When Sawatsky reported as chairman of *Randmission* in 1955, he made no mention of colportage in the "high north." There was little change in the next years though he called for teachers, not to go north, but into Métis [those of mixed French and Indian blood] colonies as missionaries. Two years later, five teachers had answered that call and were teaching in Métis/Indian schools.³

Kindermission

Returning to the enlarging focus on children, in 1946 Alberta brethren adopted the name "WCM of Alberta." The incorporation was distinct from Saskatchewan's WCM, however, though emulation was strong. Henry Nickel reported that twenty-nine volunteer teachers had gone out in fourteen school districts. Though numbers were down the next summer, Nickel was undeterred. He gave the convincing rationale we have already seen in conjunction with our statement on DVBS. To save a child had a twofold benefit: a life was saved from sin, and for early service to God.

Coming under Nickel's concern was the tract society to be organized at the Canadian Conference level. The response to this was so discouraging — only two out of eleven congregations showed any interest — that appeals were soon dropped.⁴

The years 1950 to 1952 proved significant. David Ewert

and P. R. Toews, two future leaders, were reporting for the WCM and *Randmission* committees. The outreach to children had grown, having doubled since the mid-forties. In 1951, 48 workers reached 728 children in 24 districts. Literature distribution was a prominent feature, perhaps in place of the failed official tract society. In fact, Sawatsky did colporteur work for six months. Coaldale had five extension Sunday schools, four in Gem and one in Vauxhall.

Nevertheless Toews and Ewert were critical, comparative, in their assessment. Ewert had attended Canada Inland Mission meetings in 1952 and reported, "We are only just beginning." That is, he thought Alberta was far behind Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and British Columbia, even Ontario. Toews articulated the path to take: first there should be one committee for outreach, not two; second, that committee should concentrate on children. Then, in answer to the question, where should we place our emphasis? he recommended using existing small groups of Mennonite Brethren and placing teachers in strategically located schools. Perhaps an itinerating speaker accompanied by a male quartette would be more effective and feasible than a colporteur. This was the Gospel Light Hour model with which he was familiar.⁵

As the later fifties were reached, it was obvious that other extension projects such as the city mission in Calgary and summer camps came to absorb attention and financial resources. The congregational extension Sunday schools were also taking up many of the available summer personnel. This was in such short supply that as early as 1958 brethren contemplated giving some remuneration to two persons who would do DVBS. Though Abe Konrad argued in 1959 that DVBS was still the best way to reach children, his argument and pleas went largely unheeded. DVBS was back to 1946 levels while participation in camping was rising.

A new method introduced in 1957 turned out to be long-lasting, if not effective. This was a correspondence course borrowed at first from the WCCM British Columbia. After 1960 the outreach to children beyond the congregations would be channelled through what became known as "The Mailbox." Camping became a device whereby congregational programs for children, youth, and other groups could be supplemented with greater enjoyment for all.⁶

Cultural Isolation

Before dealing with the mission to Alberta's two expanding cities, Calgary and Edmonton, we must survey the brotherhood's concern at the end of the post-war period (1945-1960) with such serious questions as zero growth, cultural isolation, and incorporation. Concern about zero growth in membership and in a leveling off of giving for missions was voiced, not by the *Randmission's* committee, but by the Conference chairman, David Pankratz, in 1957. "We are at a standstill," he warned, "even the addition of members from our own families seems threatened by certain factors." Only thirty-five had been baptized in three years, and they came from Mennonite Brethren homes. He did not know of anyone from a non-Mennonite background. Extension Sunday schools had been conducted for some years, but these were presumably kept at arms-length from the initiating congregation. And when the Home Missions Committee contemplated launching an extension work near Gem, they could not find a worker.⁷

This dilemma caused some fermentation of thought, not least about incorporation. The brother who gave frank expression to some of the fundamental problems facing Alberta's mission was John Dyck who served as secretary of the Home Missions Committee in 1962. First, he gave a brief survey of attempts to work under the banner of the WCM, which, he acknowledged, opened doors. In spite of its drawbacks, it was now felt to be "in our best interest" to acknowledge the Mennonite Brethren church as the official sponsor of the WCM. In order to solve a two-sided problem — the difficulty of getting summer personnel and of finding employment for Bible school teachers all year — he advocated cooperation with the Bible school in working out a "comprehensive employment plan" for at least one teacher. Then he focused on the most fundamental point of all: how to evangelize successfully when you are in fact culturally isolated. The same question, the reader will recall, had been asked four years earlier in British Columbia. Dyck was blunt:

There is one aspect of this venture to which we must draw attention. That is the problem of integration with other races and cultures. In the past we have engaged in evangelism and ostracism simultaneously. This practise is inconsistent and obnoxious. We are therefore grateful that the brethren of Pincher Creek, though fully recognizing the difficulties, have accepted integration for better or for worse. Indeed, we suspect that they may provide the stimulus that our Conference needs to revitalize its spirits of enterprise.

The reference was to the decision, in 1962, to turn Pincher Creek, a Mennonite Brethren church of long standing, into a "preacherless" condition, in effect, a mission church.⁸

The Calgary City Mission

Though Conference assistance for the first urban churches in Calgary and Edmonton would have been most natural and constitutional, the oversight committee had a fixation that each should also be a mission. In Calgary all that was required was to help a rapidly enlarging group of urbanized

families form a new congregation. Indeed, this was the initial preoccupation: there were working girls in the city and some Mennonite Brethren families, including two ordained and retired farmer-preachers. Brethren from Coaldale, Gem, and Vauxhall made house visitation periodically. But then, in June 1952 Ewert declared in that report already mentioned that his *Randmission* committee had decided to open a mission in Calgary comparable to those elsewhere, for example, Winnipeg and Vancouver. Stimulated by this meeting with the Canada Inland Mission committee, he gave his delegate audience the impression that unwillingness to reach out in this way would incur divine displeasure.

With such a mission in mind, he sought to find a worker. He tried first in British Columbia. Then he turned to William Falk who had just resigned from the mission in Winnipeg. Failing in that pursuit, the committee found Jake Froese at Oliver willing to move to Calgary. In this way, Calgary Gospel Light Mission got underway in the spring of 1953 and was placed under a city mission committee. A survey showed there were at least sixty members in the city by this time, of whom forty had been meeting regularly. These new Calgarians had moved from Linden, Gem, Coaldale, and other country areas, and some from other provincial cities.

The group met first in a purchased residence on Eighth Avenue, and then in the Royal Legion Hall. The property on Eighth was the Conference's first "immovable property." While the nurture of these believers was obviously Froese's first responsibility, his task with respect to the mission was left unclarified in 1954.⁹

Once the picture was clarified, it appeared that the Gospel Light Mission was to be kept under rather tight reins. The twin aim, as defined earlier by A. A. Toews, of pursuing the lost and providing nurture to the believing, was assumed. In order to ensure success in both, it had been decided in a committee chaired by H. H. Siemens that Froese should keep a day book account of his activities, both the planned and the unexpected. On the basis of a three-month log, a working plan was to be mapped out. He was given a church council, in which Abe Rempel from Vauxhall played a leading role. More than that, the committee insisted on *Hausbesuche* (house visitation) on a continuing basis, by brethren outside the group, chiefly from Coaldale.

Even though Froese was an ordained minister, brethren came down from Coaldale to baptize. When the church organized on May 6, 1956, having gone through all the channels laid down earlier, the Calgary congregation was organized as a "*Missionsgemeinde*." There were forty-two charter members with Abe Rempel as moderator.

Siemens now declared that one goal had been reached, the "ingathering of the church." What was needed next was to clarify the relationship between the new church and the mission, so that the other goal could be reached as well, the mission to the lost. This indeed became necessary as the Froeses decided to seek further education at Tabor College. A successor would have to find a more exclusive missionary role, even though Froese had initiated an active outreach in the inner city with the help of the new congregation. During the last year he had participated in a division of responsibility with the Union Gospel Mission. Weekly services and provision for food for those on skid row became part of that responsibility.¹⁰



Calgary City Mission, c. 1955.
The J. A. Froese family, who served at Oliver, B.C. and then Calgary. Justina, David, Leonard, Ruth, and Jacob.



Calgary, Alberta
Henry & Lydia Thielmann, (c. 1952).
Albert & Linda.

The next incumbents, Henry and Lydia Thielmann from Kitchener and recently returned from Japan, found ways of combining the two roles: one, that of city missionary in an active rescue work; and two, that of minister and preacher in the church but not as moderator. They arrived in January 1957 and continued the activities begun by Froese. They served the church in many capacities. Lydia Thielmann, who once belonged to the Mary-Martha Home in Winnipeg, took a leaf out of Anna Thiessen's book and began a work among girls. Meanwhile, the Calgary church, still dependent on the Conference, desperately required a building. But where would they get sixty-five thousand dollars in 1957? Actually, the Highland Church, as it came to be called, began modestly in 1958 with a basement structure at Fortieth Avenue and Center B Street, just as Winnipeg, Carman, and Hamilton mission churches had done.

Admittedly, much of Thielmann's time was devoted to the church, but a new attempt at rescue mission work was initiated at a new location — also in a slum area. The attempt to "rescue the perishing" always included a simple gospel message to be followed by sandwiches and coffee. Lydia recalled that as a result of her husband's application for some left-over wartime canned meat, she looked out one day to see a large semi-trailer truck parked outside, full of meat worth thousands of dollars. When Henry, away in Winnipeg, was called, he simply said, "put it in the basement." The Thielmanns had "meat for sandwiches for many years." Volunteers in Calgary church helped prepare those sandwiches, and ladies from Gem sent cookies, and the derelicts kept coming. The Thielmanns reported a rise from 1,746 men in 1958-59 to 8,370 in 1960-61. More than 10,000 visited the mission in the next year.

As a result of giving both spiritual and material food for

many years, Thielmann was rewarded with many confessions and some conversions. The Thielmanns gave of themselves in a way that many would have found difficult. After seven years, however, and especially when the burden of the church also fell on the Thielmanns because of Abe Regier's illness in 1963, it seemed time for a change. His take-home pay was \$180 a month. It was in that year that Highland Church, now independent and having 177 members within eight years, took responsibility for Skid Row. Henceforth, the rescue mission was supervised by church members on a part-time basis. The persons who carried this burden longest were Abe and Catharine Rempel, from 1967 to 1975.¹¹



Calgary City Mission, c. 1970.
The City Mission Building, top left and Abe and Sara Rempel, who supervised this work from 1967 to 1975.

Edmonton

When we first touched on Edmonton in conjunction with Conference concern about university students, we briefly brought in Bernard Sawatsky's ministry in Edmonton. He did his work well and was appreciated by the growing Edmonton group. He realized his limitations in English, however, and preferred to be a Bible teacher and colporteur. In fact, he was torn between Edmonton and his beloved work in the Coaldale Bible School. He found consolation, however, in the fact that Edmonton also had teachers, pianists, and singers.

As it turned out, Sawatsky felt he had to resign as leader of the Edmonton group, effective the end of 1959, largely because of his wife's illness. He did not return to Coaldale but continued to minister as colporteur and hospital visitor in Edmonton. Meanwhile, he assisted the Edmonton group in the organization of a mission church in late November 1959.¹²

The year 1959-60 was a critical one for Edmonton. Would the pattern established in Calgary be repeated? It was evident from the discussion that ensued at the 1959 conference that the Edmonton group was expecting something different from that of a mission church organization. Mennonite Brethren members were disappearing into other evangelical churches because there was no proper church in Edmonton. The crucial question raised once again was this: What is more important in Edmonton, the founding of a mission, or helping the group to become established as a city church? One would have thought the question had been answered long ago. Everywhere else the innermost mission took precedence, but then, there was Conference money involved here.

After lengthy discussion, a committee was struck in order to make a "thorough investigation of the whole situation." Ultimately, of course, Edmonton was to have a full-fledged church, but what about the intermediate stage? As no replacement could be found immediately for Sawatsky, the supervising committee asked Henry Thielmann to serve Edmonton on Sundays during 1960, until a worker could be found. His travel was facilitated by providing air fare between Calgary and Edmonton.

The appointed committee lost no time. On August 5, 1959, nine brethren representing the Conference, the *Randmission*, and nearby Lindbrook Church descended on the somewhat hapless Edmonton group. Committee deliberations only confirmed the thinking at the June conference: Edmonton must accept the guidelines for a mission church, and then six thousand dollars might be awarded for the purchase of a lot for a future building. On this basis, the organizational event of November, already mentioned, went forward. The charter members, with few exceptions, were former Coaldalers.

All might have been well except that Thielmann's ministry showed up some serious concerns (*Noete*). His request that the Alberta Committee of Reference and Counsel undertake home visitation on the Calgary model was quickly heeded. David Pankratz and Thielmann were asked to visit each of about ten families involved at the time. Their report affirmed many positive features about the new group, but also confirmed what some wanted to believe that, as the Conference report read, some members "do not respect and heed the Mennonite Brethren conference guidelines and warnings. This circumstance, plus the circulation of false rumors, has brought it to this that the Edmonton group has gained a bad reputation among individuals and churches in the Alberta conference."¹³

Fortunately for Edmonton, by June 1960 the committee had found Peter Rempel from Vauxhall to lead the group as pastor. It also found Peter Borgen, a strong personality to defend them against this unwarranted attack. Though there was much good will on both sides, and though Rempel completely ignored the problem in his subsequent report to Conference, others were more persistent. Borgen was one of these. He had given six years to the Coaldale high school and knew very well that the guidelines that were thought to have been violated were those ethical ones then being applied to cosmetics and television.

Perhaps it is not surprising that this was a widespread preoccupation in the first half of the fifties. But the majority of the Edmonton group would not have this kind of dictation. They intended to become a church; and they wanted to determine the location, size, and design of any building to be constructed. Location and design should reflect their real status in Edmonton society, not necessarily their status according to an older city mission concept. Also, they should reflect Edmonton's objectives: first, a home for Mennonite Brethren members; second, a place where university students would feel welcome; third, community outreach among their peers; and fourth, a Skid Row mission if that were possible. But they had no intention of beginning at the end. They would rather not take support from the Conference if it was made conditional.

One of the conditions that had been suggested was that Edmonton's memberships should be lodged with

Lindbrook/Tofield until the church should be properly constituted. This would have placed Edmonton in a position similar to that of Oliver. Fortunately, leadership in Tofield refused that.

Peter Rempel, a graduate of Coaldale Bible school and a brother to Abe in Calgary, was expected to bring the Edmonton "mavericks" around. But not many people knew that Peter had rethought matters for himself only three months before he went to Edmonton. As Urie Bender, Peter Rempel's biographer, put it:

When Peter began his role as leader of the Edmonton group, a new frontier was nudging at his awareness: the courage to be honest about change as well as his convictions. "The way I read those people, I would be allowed to be honest all the way. So I decided, before I went, that whatever was open and honest there, I would accept." . . . This fledgling group in Edmonton seemed to provide the embryonic setting within which he would become vulnerable and test his own ideas about Christian pilgrimage.¹⁴

Here is confirmation that Rempel was then more in tune with those considered radical by the Alberta Conference. To them he was as an identifying pastor, whereas Conference leadership thought of him as their *Missionsarbeiter* to bring Edmonton into line. Actually, when Rempel moderated the first critical discussion about language, his leadership in an extensive and open discussion led to a unanimous vote to change to English. This was for the sharing of their fundamental faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord "at the crossroads of culture and business [as] a natural part of everyday experience."



Sod turning, Lendrum, c. 1962.
Peter Rempel with spade, Abe Konrad, second to his left.

Following his ordination (in Calgary's Highland Church), the Edmonton group organized on November 4, 1962 as Lendrum Mennonite Brethren Church, and then built an educational wing called Fellowship Hall at 59th Avenue and 112th Street. Until then, they had made do with various places, especially James Gibbons School. By January 1966, Lendrum was prepared to assume full financial responsibility with ninety-four members. All the while, Rempel kept a positive tone, despite many criticisms stemming from the anxieties aroused in the first years, and the church grew rapidly.¹⁵

E. Ontario

Even though the Ontario Conference had organized in 1932 and joined the *BK* in 1939, it was not an integral part of the Canadian Conference scene until 1945. Nevertheless, the delineation of home mission was much the same as we have seen elsewhere. For most people, home mission meant the innermost mission, at least until DVBS was distinguished from it as outreach. In Ontario's case, the innermost included Bethesda Home for the mentally handicapped. Bethesda had been an Ontario project until its leadership did a trade-off with the NDC. In exchange for help with MBBC, Ontario would receive assistance with the development of Bethesda. That was the one institutional difference in Ontario. In spite of this development in isolation from the western provinces, Ontario was a haven for many ex-Saskatchewanians and Manitobans. Besides, Ontario had been sending *Reiseprediger* out west, H. H. Janzen and Abram Huebert among Russians, and others like Dietrich Klassen who itinerated with Janzen. So there were cross currents and substantial influences running from west to east and east to west.¹

DVBS and the Bible School

The Ontario Conference leadership was pleasantly surprised in 1944-45 by the spontaneous result of the inner dynamic at work. Young people had gone out with DVBS programs during the summer of 1944, perhaps even 1943, from both Vineland and Virgil. From the best sources possible — the people who were there — we know that in Vineland Henry Penner and John Andres helped to inspire outreach, even if not far afield. In Virgil, on the other hand, where the Bible school was revived, Abram J. Block and Hermann Voth stimulated their students to such activity. In this way *Randmission* (a term not used in Vineland) had its "embryonic beginning." These leaders had all been to Bible school in the west. Block had taught at Hepburn and was therefore imbued with the spirit that prevailed there — a story we have told. Hermann Voth, a graduate of Winkler in 1940, now used WBS material to get DVBS started in Ontario. These were some of the connections and the stimuli.

This initial outgoing drew the attention of the ministers' and deacons' conference, and a lively discussion was carried into the conference. In a small conference of six congregations, Conference executive leadership equalled the Home Missions Committee to all intents and purposes. This leadership, which included H. H. Janzen as moderator, struck a committee, including two teachers from the Bible school, Block and Voth, to organize and channel the new dynamism.

When John Andres was able to report in 1945 that 25 teachers had gone into ten schools and reached 405 children, the response was very encouraging. A new initiative was born. Interestingly enough, the very first young people to go from Virgil in 1944 seem to have found an open door in Coldwater, north of Toronto, and only a short distance from Hampshire district where a secessionist group was leaving the United Church of Canada in that year. The two movements would be intimately linked by 1950.²

Enthusiasm ran high in 1946. The war was over. The churches and people were thankful for release from the fear of using the German language. In the spring of 1946 Andres as



Vineland M.B. Teachers — many of whom helped in Hamilton and St. Anns & their resource persons (1957).
From the right: John Wiebe, Martin Durksen, Abe J. Block, Abe Dueck, Edmund Janzen is tall in the back.

secretary of the Home Missions Committee organized the first DVBS workers' conference in Vineland. Woldemar Dyck of Kitchener wrote that eighty young people had come. Forty schools could be anticipated. In actual fact, only fifty persons went out, but nevertheless it was a solid beginning. In 1947 there was a slight increase. Only when a full-time worker devoted his complete attention to organizing placement and direction during summer months did DVBS "take off." That was in 1957 under the direction of John Unger, an early enthusiast for Christian education, followed by John Boldt, who had many years of experience in Winkler, and Jake Neufeld, another Winkler graduate. DVBS peaked about 1967 when the equivalent of 441 teachers went out, reaching over 3,000 children, and registering about 100 decisions. After that DVBS began to decline, for reasons that will become more obvious as we turn to the last two decades.³

It is significant that in Ontario, as in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and British Columbia, the Bible school became the organizing and stimulating institution, at least until about 1957. The Ontario Bible School, begun by a society, became Conference responsibility in 1948. In 1955 it was moved to Kitchener, where it served until 1966. Though the



Ontario Home Missions Committee, (1955).
Henry Penner, J. J. Toews, John Andres, Peter Rempel, Ernie Dyck.

Home Missions Committee reported to the IMK, it was felt advisable after 1947 to formalize the connection between summer outreach and the Bible School by ensuring that one teacher should be on the committee. The rationale given was that, after all, it was "in the Bible school where the missionary spirit is inculcated."

In 1948 that person was Peter J. Esau whom we have seen at Winkler Bible School, in British Columbia, and in Manitoba at both Lindal and Ashern. He was charged with field direction and colportage. As a result of his endeavors, a recommendation was made to create a "permanent work" in the field northwest of Orillia, to which we will turn next. For some years Esau combined Bible school teaching in the winter and a range of outreach activities in the summer: DVBS, colportage, and for several years, tract distribution on the initiative of the Canadian Conference. From about 1956, official linkage between this outreach and the Bible School was broken. That was also the time the school moved to Kitchener. A new Home Missions Committee took over as



Hamilton, Ontario, (1956).
John and Mary Unger, pastoral couple, and Dan.

the field of operation expanded, and John Unger became field director during summer months. The long-term members of this committee were Henry Penner, St. Catharines, Ernie Dyck, Virgil, and Peter Rempel, Kitchener.⁴

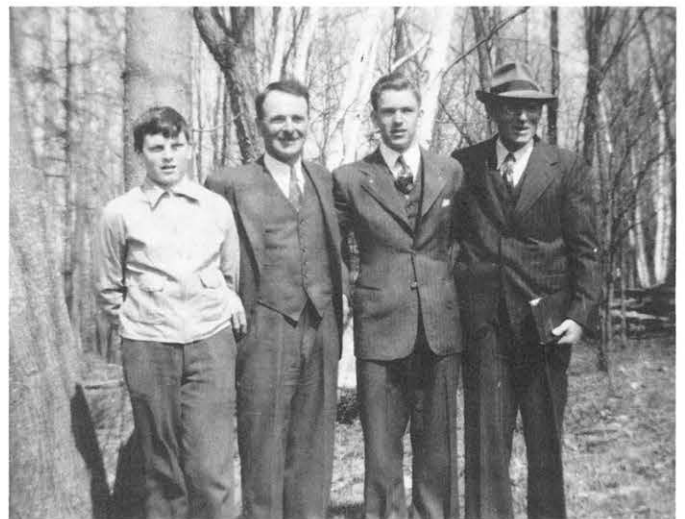
"The Invasion of Menno Simons"

One of the most interesting articles to appear in the *Konferenz-Jugendblatt* was John L. Tipping's "The Invasion of Menno Simons." A. H. Unruh even had it translated for his *Geschichte* (History) of 1954. Tipping was a dry-goods merchant in the town of Coldwater, northwest on the rail line between Orillia and Georgian Bay. He met the Henry H. Dick family from Kitchener in 1950. The Dicks had accepted the challenge of serving that area as the first long-term outreach of the Ontario Conference. Imagine the surprise occasioned in this Presbyterian-Anglican-United Church



Coldwater, Ontario, (1950).
Henry H. Dick and John L. Tipping (author of "The Invasion of Menno Simons").

town when a "Mennonite preacher" rented the Gray house. Well, Tipping told how Dick, who came from MBBC in 1950, had arrived on his doorstep as a veritable Menno Simons. Dick "invaded," in turn, Coldwater, Mount Stephen, Hampshire, the public schools of the area, and finally Tipping's heart. Tipping, an organist, responded to Dick's request to help with the music in the services. "After some weeks, I found myself taking stock of my spiritual life." Tipping was converted and began to work with the Christian Fellowship Chapel that developed in the countryside. After a strong beginning, holding services in three areas, giving religious instruction in nine public schools, and making quite a mark on the people of Coldwater, the work shifted to the farming district of Hampshire.⁵



Hampshire/Orillia, (April 1944).
George Whitney, son of the founder Norman Whitney, George Gowanlock, George Delaney, George Newby.

The reason for this shift from Coldwater was the presence there of the secessionist group mentioned earlier. In 1944, led by Norman Whitney, a number of families

whose names soon became household words in the Ontario Conference — Whitney, Gowanlock, Brown, and Crouch — left the Gray United Church because they wished to nurture their evangelical faith. They believed their denomination “had largely forsaken the care and spiritual redemption for the individual, and had substituted outward reformation and social improvement. . . .” There was no large renewal segment in the United Church in that decade as there is today. For several years, they had met in the Whitney home. George Whitney writes,

I was remembering yesterday . . . how we’d look out on a Sunday morning, and see people walking down the concession line to get to the meeting. Often in winter there’d be heavy drifts, as snow-ploughing wasn’t done nearly as often then, and the walkers would be climbing over these drifts as we watched.

George was about fifteen then. His father asked Dick whether the Ontario Conference would consider taking responsibility for the leadership of that house church. As this proposal fit into the general area canvassed earlier and coincided with Dick’s activities, it seemed like God’s leading, and the answer was in the affirmative. Because this was a mature group of Christians who had waited for six years for some secure and satisfying affiliation, the question of organization came up rather quickly. Dick explained to the Conference in late 1952 that they had organized as a mission church, had built a chapel out of an old building, but something more was desired. While the chapel group wanted to know more about the New Testament believers’ church, so to speak, they had already developed a good-fellow feeling with the Conference. Hence the Home Missions Committee grappled with the fundamental question discussed in a previous chapter: “How can the children of God on our mission stations be helped to form healthy, fruitful, biblical churches?”



Orillia/Hampshire
John B. & Katie Epp, pastoral couple, 1954-5.

When John and Katie Epp replaced the Dicks in 1954, there were eighteen baptized members of the Chapel and eight others considering the matter of rebaptism. Epp had the joy of baptizing fourteen in 1956 and reported that steady progress was being made — through systematic teaching of the Mennonite Brethren confession of faith — in the direction of an ordered church life. When Epp returned to school in 1957, he left the matter of incorporation to the next incumbent.⁶

Herman Kroeker came in 1957 with his wife, Irene, a sister of Harvey Gossen, and stayed ten years. He was a 1950 graduate of PBI and for six years had been radio preacher of “Moments of Blessing,” an outreach of the Virgil church. What attracted him to Hampshire, among other things, was the radio broadcast “The Chapel Speaks,” which Dick had started and Epp continued. In 1958 Kroeker reported teaching 383 children every week in 14 schools, and also having the potential for a church with 37 members.

When the Chapel was finally organized in 1961, mobility hazards had affected the membership. Hence there were only twenty baptized members and three adherents. When the Kroekers left, having discontinued the radio ministry for stewardship reasons the membership stood at twenty-seven, with nine adherents. The field of operation seemed limited as to growth potential. The next stage including the arrival at full independence in 1976, and the subsequent agonizing reappraisal of identification must be left to Part Three.⁷

Hamilton

Hamilton does not seem to have been touched by DVBS until the summer of 1953. In the previous year, however, Peter Esau as field man and colporteur had worked in a difficult area for some time, filled with low-income people and troublesome to the police. Esau met the “Morality Inspector,” a Christian who stated that if the Mennonite Brethren wanted to work where there was a felt need, then Osborne Street was the area. As it turned out, the Alliance church preceded Esau, and he shifted the focus of DVBS in 1954 to Lake Street. The Vineland church, thirty-two kilometers away, was prepared to support young people who would conduct a Sunday school weekly.



DVBS, Ontario, (1958).
Teachers in Hamilton, supervised by John Unger, Lydia Warkentin, John Eckert, Margaret Koop, Wally Unger, Justina Becker.

As Hamilton, a large urban industrial area at the head of Lake Ontario (on the ‘Golden Horseshoe’), promised to be a needy field, the Conference decided to place its second worker there. John Unger, a graduate of Herbert and MBBC, and his wife, Mary began in 1955 by supporting the work of the Lake Street Sunday School. He received permission, as at Hampshire, to give religious instruction in elementary schools, and began to visit homes in the area where the children lived, on Wexford. In 1957 he also began to coor-

dinate DVBS for the provincial conference, enrolling nearly two thousand children. For his Sunday School he had a staff of twelve commuting from Vineland, while he taught eight hundred public school children every week in twenty-five classes.



Hamilton, Ontario, 434 Osborne Street, (1958 to 1962). Groundbreaking ceremony, 1958: Henry Penner, _____, C. M. Penner, John Unger, pastor, A. P. Janzen, Doug Coombs, Baptist mainister, _____, H. P. Wiebe, Vineland pastor, _____, Aaron Wall, Leonard Martens, Ernie Reimer, and Peter Derksen.

Moreover, a decision had been taken to locate a chapel on Osborne Street after all, in the depressed area. Among the reasons for choosing this area were the availability of low cost lots, the failure of the Alliance church to follow through, and, as indicated, the opinion of the metropolitan police force. While adults were sending their children to the Lake Street Sunday School, they themselves were not coming. It was hoped that a permanent site — even if at first it was a basement structure — would attract parents as well. This was dedicated in the early part of 1959.



The Christian Fellowship Chapel as completed and used and sold.

In time, the Ungers were able to replace the Vineland staff with their own supply of workers and to organize a mission church of twenty-six members. When they left, John Boldt, then teaching Bible school in Kitchener, took over DVBS responsibilities while David and Rose Nickel came to replace the Ungers. When they stayed only one year, and John and

Martha Reimer from British Columbia replaced them, it was time to reassess the situation. A move seemed imperative.⁸



Stoney Creek/Hamilton, Ontario, (about 1965). John Reimer, pastor, and the church he built.

Reimer, a long-time worker at Harrison Hot Springs and field director of the WCCM, was not the man to shrink from taking a second look. He did so and in 1963 articulated the problems with the Osborne location. There were adverse developments not of their own making, namely, rezoning for industrial development. It seemed for that reason alone that expansion was not advisable. Also, Reimer was no longer convinced, as Unger had been, that the Sunday school, even if it was "the right arm of the church," was necessarily the best *outreach* arm of the church, especially when the Hamilton congregation depended on many commuters. This made community outreach impossible; besides, this was a shrinking community to reach into.

Eventually, after some search, the Hamilton church found a new location in Stoney Creek, on Highway 8, where the lots were going for \$17,500. A church would cost \$55,000. The Osborne Street basement chapel was sold for \$10,000. By the time the Reimers left for Steinbach in 1967, a new building of modern design had been sited and dedicated in October 1967. It was assumed that with this move at such expense, a community outreach would be possible and successful, and Mountview Mennonite Brethren Church, as organized, would not have to depend so much on commuters. The story of how this unfolded under the next three pastors will be told henceforth.⁹

Niagara

The development of the Niagara Christian Fellowship Chapel, not many miles from Virgil and Niagara-on-the-Lake, had very little help, if any, from the Conference. This, like the early Bible school and DVBS was voluntarist and congregational in nature. Whereas Vineland helped in Hamilton, Virgil young people launched the Niagara Sunday school mission. (The Virgil church had supported the Bible school, DVBS, and "Moments of Blessing.") They began with fifteen workers in 1951 and by 1954 had developed the chapel, as named. The leaders were C. M. Penner, Ernie

Dyck, Harvey Gossen, and Jacob Pankratz who had left the Jewish work in Winnipeg in 1953. By late 1957 they had organized Ontario's "Seventh Mennonite Brethren Church," having outstripped those organized farther afield by Conference initiative.

While in some way this was an English off-shoot of a mother church, it was more. It was a highly-motivated reaching-out "into Judea and Samaria" — into Niagara-on-the-Lake, to Queenston, and to the fruit farmers in between. In 1957 there were thirty-seven members of the mother church working in the chapel and twenty-six baptized members who had no equivalent church home. To rectify this, the Virgil church agreed to sponsor the incorporation to full status of these workers and their new believers in one congregation, keeping in mind the "obligations and privileges" entailed.¹⁰



Niagara Christian Fellowship Chapel Baptism, c. 1961.
Front: Irene Neudorf, Diana Dyck, Dolores Klassen, Ruth Pankratz, & J. H. Pankratz.
Second: Clair Boyle, Robert Thiessen, Arnold Nickel, Fred Mohlmann.
Third: Ken Paetkau, Ed Baumann, pastor & Melvin Thiessen.

Some members of the Chapel recall that these various plateaus in the upward evolution of the church caused some members considerable mortification. Mission churches like Hampshire/Orrillia, and even as we saw with respect to Edmonton, felt "second-class," on a "lower rung"; they felt treated as if they were "out there." Moreover, many of the first buildings were of poor quality, as was the case in Hampshire, Hamilton, and Niagara. Attendance did not pick up until new facilities of modern design were built. In the long run, another daughter church, Scott Street's Fairview on Geneva Street in St. Catharines, was more successful in community outreach than Niagara. For one thing, Fairview's timing was more favorable, as was its location, and the first building was most attractive, commodious — a pleasure to visit. Niagara's first building, by comparison, stood in the midst of prime fruit country on Progressive Avenue.¹¹

Puslinch or Waterloo?

Another comparable effort, with poorer results for the long run, was launched in Puslinch by the Kitchener Mennonite Brethren Church, beginning in 1947. That is not to say it was unimportant for those involved, nor for those lives that

were touched by DVBS and Sunday school teachers. On the contrary, some of those who served had their apprenticeship for full-time service, for example Herb Swartz.

This was at first a "private effort" initiated by Peter Rempel, supported by David Wiens, Corny Baerg, Lydia Dick (sister of Henry), and Helen Boldt. They taught Bible



Puslinch, Kitchener's Extension S.S. (1950s).
Teachers Helen Boldt, Lydia Dick, Helen Kasper, Herb Swartz.

classes in Killean School District 7, about twenty kilometers from Kitchener. Two years later, on May 7, 1949, once they had begun with a monthly evening service, the Kitchener church adopted this as its extension work. It continued under the leadership of Herb Swartz, assisted by Lydia, Helen, and Helen Kasper.

When Hardy and Ella Klassen took over in 1954, they conducted five classes on a Sunday afternoon, held a monthly evening service, and made such festivals as Christmas and Easter very special. In 1958, under Jake and Helen Loewen, a second school, Killean 11, was opened. As the work seemed to blossom, some consideration was given to building a chapel in order to serve families, and not only children, of this largely unchurched area.



Killean #7, 1958.
Teachers at back, George Wiens (Kitchener), Ella Klassen (middle of group), Jake Loewen (tallest), & Hardy Klassen on the right.

For several years, John Unger tried to coordinate DVBS with the ongoing work of the two locations. By 1962, however, considerable change overwhelmed the area: consolidation of schools made the Killeans obsolete, and urbanization and industrialization drew families away. Then there was the problem of the commuting staff. This meant a loss of contact with the families during the week.

These factors, and perhaps a loss of zest, called for a committee to reevaluate the whole. Since an extension Sunday school under Vic Huebert had also been taken to Waterloo, some thought it made more sense to work within the metropolitan area. Gradually the church came to the conclusion, in harmony with the new trend, that what was needed in Waterloo was a church for families within which a Sunday school could and would be developed. In any case, the Puslinch work was discontinued because, as Loewen wrote, by 1965 "we as workers had the definite feeling that the church was [no longer] behind us in this work." Attempts were made to find a Baptist church to take up the slack. Meantime, the suggestion that a church should be launched in Waterloo as a daughter of the Kitchener church received much support. The study committee had concluded, "We would recommend . . . that in view of the need and potentialities in Waterloo [we] study the possibility of undertaking definite action to establish a Mennonite Brethren church. . . ." A self-supporting congregation was formed there in 1967.¹²

Toronto

Seed-thoughts about a work in Toronto seem to have become prayer-thoughts about 1953. There were some students and also some Mennonite couples living in the big city. The Committee of Reference and Counsel had the question of a Toronto mission on its agenda on September 16, 1956 and again in November. The one who seems to have brought it to their attention was J. J. Toews, then pastor in Kitchener, and a member of the Home Missions Committee. Thereupon Unger, resident in Hamilton, was asked to make contact with those in Toronto who might be interested in starting a church in Toronto. He found about two dozen such people who were more or less interested. Among the families then resident were those of David Warkentin, Ben C. Doell, Jack Derksen, and Neil Rempel.



Toronto, Ontario, 1957.
Willowdale Christian Fellowship, Burke Street.
Neil Rempels, Jack Derksens, Ben Doells, Jake Wienses, H. H. Voths on the right.

As it seemed impossible to find a hall for rent, the group purchased a house, with Conference help, at 10 Burke Street, Willowdale, as this seemed to be the desirable area. Persuaded by Toews to stay in Toronto to give leadership to this group, Henry H. Voth cancelled his plans to study south of the border and moved to Willowdale. He began services in the living room on September 22, 1957, and a Sunday school began in January once the basement had been prepared. The name given to the venture was "Willowdale Christian Fellowship," and the house was dedicated for mission on January 26, 1958. At the November conference of that year, Voth reported that nineteen members were in support but that mobility was high.

The reasons for establishing a work in Toronto were given by Neil Rempel when Willowdale visited Vineland. He seemed most concerned about students in the city. They and other young people "who leave home to live or study in a large city, may easily drift away from the faith. They find no church exactly to their liking, and since no one is concerned about them, they may quit attending church altogether."¹³



Toronto, Ontario.
Herbert & Margaret Swartz & Beth, David, Heather, & Patricia on lap. (taken 1964).
Church pastor (1959-62).

During the summer of 1959, Henry Voth was replaced by Herb Swartz. Enthusiasm seemed high, as the group had grown to forty, including children. Perhaps there were limitations to the building of a community church in Willowdale, if all meetings were to be confined to a home. Nevertheless, on August 15, 1959, the Fellowship, together with the home missions board, decided to remove the witness from Willowdale to Lawrence Heights, between Bathurst and Dufferin. The rationale given was that a low-rental housing project enclosing over four thousand people would provide just the challenging outreach that the group needed.

It seemed that, as in Calgary and Edmonton, and before that in Winnipeg, the Conference did not want to support a work unless mission was a direct object. At first the Fellowship met in the Baycrest School. Then it moved more suitably to Flemington Road School, where the younger children from Lawrence Heights attended. The Burke Street property was sold and an older house purchased at 272 Rane Avenue. Also, in 1960, now that the Fellowship had

a more acceptable focus, the Ontario Conference assumed full financial responsibility for the expanding work.

When the Fellowship, which was organized as the Toronto Mennonite Brethren Mission Church on May 28, 1961, failed to acquire an adjacent lot on Ranee, they planned to build on the existing lot, only 82 feet by 245 feet. A new church was projected on the basis of the "unlimited potential for a mission church" in Toronto. The detailed demography of the Lawrence Heights Housing Project was given as the only object of mission. Nothing was said of the Jewish, Italian, and other European peoples living around the project and on the south side of Ranee Avenue.

When Swartz resigned in 1962 to take up full-time studies, he reported both the encouraging and discouraging aspects of the work. There was a 50 percent increase in membership, and the Sunday school was expanding. On the other hand, the "relative indifference of the community to the Gospel and the fact that our members live in a scattered area are challenges which test our devotion as disciples. . . ." There were two problems that might be wrapped up in one question: How could members of professional status commuting from all directions — Agincourt to Etobicoke and beyond — relate to people living in welfare housing? The decision to move to Lawrence Heights proved to be a fateful day. While there is still a community church in the area, now named Yorkdale, there is no Mennonite Brethren church in Toronto, as there surely would be if the group had persevered, with Conference assistance, in Willowdale.¹⁴



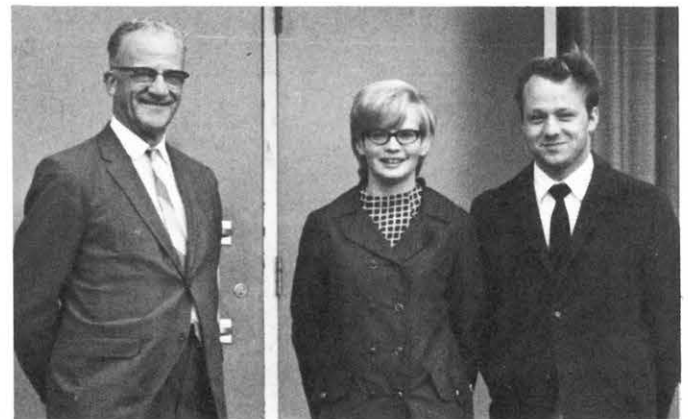
Toronto, 1962.
Peter, Ruth, Robert, & Justina Penner. Pastoral Couple.

Peter and Justina Penner had no sooner moved to Ranee in September 1962 when construction of the new chapel began at the back doorstep. All was done between October and March, and the new edifice was dedicated on March 31, 1963. Much credit must be given to persons like David Warkentin, a medical doctor and chairman of the building committee, who drove sixteen miles from Agincourt before breakfast to do finishing work, and planned to be back in his office to see patients at 0900 hours. Warkentin's committee had the assistance of Jacob Reimer, a St. Catharines contractor, who brought his men over on Monday morning and stayed



Toronto Ranee Ave. Church Construction Site, Fall 1962.
Jacob Reimer, Supervisor, and Paraguayer workmen from St. Catharines.

until Friday. The latter were Low-German speaking "Paraguayer," as they were called, good men, tremendous workers. They slept in the basement of 272 Ranee while Reimer occupied the guest room upstairs. Outside on the site, these Paraguayer worked alongside the Italian bricklayers. While Warkentin reported on the construction in 1963, Penner reminded the delegates that perhaps in our



Toronto, 1968.
I. Tiessen with Pete Balzer, MCC/VS, supervising hot lunch at Lawrence Heights.

concern to relocate to Lawrence Heights we had forgotten about one of the original purposes in starting the work: "to serve the needs of university students. We conceive of this as being an important part of our assignment. For what use is it if we spend all our energies on children and unchurched homes, and neglect the young students who come out of a Mennonite home?"

The Toronto church was blessed with enough talent and dedication in order to have achieved that object in another location. All this time the problem of reaching the community remained. Those who improved their situation moved away, and the more helpless and poor remained. But the commuting members were still commuting, from Brampton to Oshawa in 1963-64.¹⁵

The church was without a resident pastor for one year

when Rudy Dueckman, Brampton, served as moderator. A senior man, and former moderator of the Ontario Conference, Isaac Tiessen, came with his wife Anna (a daughter of Abram Huebert) in 1965. While his sermons reflected the concerns of an older generation, he nevertheless opened new relationships with other Mennonite churches that had not been possible before, and while he was in Toronto, a new method of penetrating into Lawrence Heights was found. Tiessen, in collaboration with MCC and other Mennonite pastors like John Hess, transferred his experience with MCC and brought the full force of voluntary service to bear on Lawrence Heights.

Until then no one had come to grips with the real problem, which was poverty and other related deprivations. In 1970 Tiessen reported that the MCC program and "our involvement with the social agencies of the area continue to give us open doors that would otherwise be closed." When Tiessen

resigned in 1971 at age sixty-seven it was recognized that the work he had done for the congregation and for Lawrence Heights was of considerable magnitude. His "effective counselling and community ministry are paying off in greater witness opportunities for the church."

There were suggestions, however, that "we are seeking more effective avenues of church-centered witness through further Mennonite Brethren Conference-supported Christian Service placements." In other words, the inter-Mennonite cooperation was to be minimized and Mennonite Brethren Christian Service to be utilized. Under the leadership of Allen Guenther, who had come from British Columbia to study theology and who worked as Tiessen's assistant in 1970-71, the church went on to become independent and ceased reporting. The subsequent decision, however, to split into two congregations, forming a new one in Brampton, brought Toronto into Conference focus again in 1978.¹⁶

PART III
THE CHURCH PLANTING
ERA,
1960-1983

VII

SOME MAJOR THEMES IN THE CHURCH PLANTING ERA

We are now entering a period about which we can be much less definitive than about the earlier two periods. We do not have the same advantages of distance that make the subject of the Mission Church era almost academic. Also, participants in that era now in their declining years, have been ready to offer some critical analyses. As well, some private correspondence has become available. With respect to the Church Planting era, however, not all of the material is in, nor is the angle of the historical lens wide enough to capture a subject so near. In this brief overview of the last two decades, we can only highlight some of the main themes and show some chronological connecting and theoretical links in the movement toward a full-blown theory of church planting.

"Decade of Enlargement"

One of the recurring themes is the insistent demand for greater numerical results — a refrain repeated by field directors, Conference moderators, and not least by businessmen. Jack Block's call in 1963 makes him representative of those who placed mission in the context of utility and investment. "Can mission workers do less" than businessmen who "seek the best terms" and returns possible? He called for an examination of "our home missions program," in order to avoid the costly mistakes of the past, to improve and produce greater results.¹

A movement to increase the yield began in the United States Conference and had an impact on the Canadian brethren, at least for a short time. This was the "decade of enlargement" program initiated by Elmo Warkentin of the board of Christian Education in the United States Conference. George Konrad adapted Warkentin's challenge for the Canadian constituency. This declaration called for the Conference to double its membership in one decade — specifically during the decade of 1965 to 1975! This would necessitate a 7 percent *net gain* per year. This was the first articulation in Mennonite Brethren circles of the new missiology of church growth and church planting. The message was clear: if we don't have definite goals for such an increase we will continue to limp along with gains of less than half of that.

How would this challenge be accepted in Canadian committees, conferences, and congregations? If adopted, the Sunday school would have to double attendance. Every existing program of the innermost church life would have to be thoroughly evaluated, not only outreach programs. New "materials, evaluation forms, and programs would need to be prepared to help" in achieving church growth of this magnitude. In other words, extensive promotion and bureaucratic machinery would have to be put into place to handle such increases. Above all, leaders would have to be trained in greater numbers, to handle the anticipated increase in members. The last point in this media pitch to the congregations read as follows:

An immediate emphasis on evangelism is needed.

Training and implementation of visitation for each church, community Bible classes, prayer breakfasts, organization of a conference-wide evangelistic laymen's organization, a national radio broadcast, will be needed to win the lost and unchurched.

If this was to be the new "divine mandate," then "definite action" (rather an understatement) would have to be taken.²

Canadian signals in response were not that clear, nor was the Conference prepared in 1965 to accept the Decade of Enlargement program. While it was becoming obvious that the new focus would have to be on adults who, if won, would bring their children, there was not yet the same understanding in Canada that outreach would now shift to the more affluent segment of society, bypassing the disadvantaged, and that it would have to be redefined to mean suburban neighborliness and friendship evangelism. In fact, there were some who seemed to deplore the suggestion that we should now be building nothing more than "an upper middle class sophisticated church." Basing his appeal on the findings of an official government study, John Wiebe in 1965 suggested very strongly that Mennonite Brethren, especially teachers, should give themselves to "the outcast of the twentieth century." Yet even those who went to Newfoundland's needy outposts in the 1960s, of whom Wiebe was aware, hardly ever stayed longer than two years, and that was not long enough to leave "a permanent beneficial influence on a demoralized, hopeless community."

Abe Wieler, who had many opportunities to observe home mission activity in several provinces, was gravely concerned two years later that brethren everywhere were becoming "weary in well-doing." He was clearly worried that too much pressure was being applied on indigeneity — a systematic reduction of the assistance given. There were some fields, he believed, whether wisely chosen or not, that would never stand on their own feet. Were they to be abandoned? He was also keenly aware that "college-bred students are inclined to look for pastorates in larger established centers or for positions in schools, colleges, etc., rather than employment with home mission boards." He stated,

My greatest concern has to do with training workers for smaller churches. If college graduates find it difficult to accept assignments in such churches, where shall we find them? Our college and seminaries are producing good workers, but the dearth of mission workers is becoming increasingly lamentable. Perhaps we will have to look to the Bible Institutes for workers, even if their young men are not fully trained. Let them accept pastorates in our home missions program and work diligently for a few years. Even though they may need to pursue their education, they will have had a taste of ministry.³

It is now well known that this ambitious program of doubling in a decade did not succeed in the United States or in Canada. A comparison of the 1966 and 1978 triennial figures will suffice to demonstrate this. Membership in the United States in 1965 was 14,081 and in Canada 15,807, making a total of 29,888, in 99 and 108 congregations respectively. Ten years later, membership had increased in the United States Conference to only 15,870 and in Canada to 18,663, making a total of 34,533. This represented a total increase of only 5,645. The percentage growth rate probably averaged about 2 percent per annum, instead of the 7 percent that was required. A study of church growth during a period of three decades made by Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary (MBBS) students in 1981 showed that there was an increase in the number of General Conference Mennonite Brethren congregations started whose initiation began before the Decade of Enlargement and that there was a downturn in newstarts in the midst of the program.⁴



Canadian Conference Committee on Evangelism, 1964-5.
D. H. Epp, H. Epp, John M. Schmidt, George L. Braun, Jake Bergen, Herb Brandt.

Restructuring the Conference

While it was not stated that finding solutions to the proposal for a national radio broadcast or meeting the challenge of the Decade of Enlargement program was behind the restructuring, it is nevertheless clear that in 1965 the Conference raised the question of reorganization. Nothing along this line or of this magnitude had been done since the decentralization of 1954. The 1965 report stated only that the "question of a complete reorganization of our own Canadian Conference received thought and consideration." *The Mennonite Brethren Herald* stated that reorganization seemed necessary because of the "proliferation of committees, and the increasing problems in distinguishing lines of responsibility."

Thereupon, a three-man study commission was appointed "to study the total structure of our Conference. . . ." This commission recommended the creation of six boards whose division of responsibility would put these boards "in charge of the total work of the conference." Together, meeting once a year between conferences they would form a "Council of Boards." The Conference would become a ratifying body and many questions would continue to be sent to the churches for affirmation. The six new boards were Reference and Counsel (BRC, a replacement for the FSK and sometimes

called the Board of Spiritual and Social Concerns, BSSC), Evangelism, Christian Education, Higher Education, Publication, and Management.

This report and its recommendations were sent to the congregations for consideration, and the vote was 2,060 in favor, and 391 against. While at first it was thought that one executive secretary could replace the former one-man secretariat working for an honorarium out of his own home (like D. K. Duerksen), it was not long before every eleven-member board had its own executive officer and the secretariat to match.⁵

Such restructuring was instituted gradually in some provincial conferences also, especially in British Columbia and Manitoba, where home missions alone could rationalize the need for an executive officer with a staff to match. In British Columbia, the WCCM had given way to the MBM/BC in 1962 and further restructuring there brought about the creation of the Board of Church Extension (BOCE). In Manitoba, at the same time, a rethinking of priorities took place that led to a division of labor. Also, the Gospel Light Hour had become so multifaceted as to require executive officers to direct the many sub-divisions involved. Thus, a virtual new bureaucracy of Conference employees was created, mostly headquartered in Winnipeg. In Saskatchewan, the two districts finally merged completely in 1966, and in Alberta the WCM became the Mennonite Brethren Mission of Alberta in 1970.

Delbert Wiens coincidentally feared that such new institutions would assert their own prerogatives. "Instead of remaining a tool, [they] more and more become the master. Those to whom the mantle is given become 'officials,' 'professionals.'" While he was not yet pessimistic about this trend, he saw the end result in other denominations when the institution "forces consensus from the top." As the rationale given for restructuring in 1966 was not theological but administrative, the fear of bureaucratization could be real.⁶

The board with which this book is most concerned is Evangelism. Among the responsibilities assigned to it were evangelism generally, the Conference evangelist, radio evangelization, the Quebec work, and other fields outside provincial jurisdictions. Though the Canada Inland Mission reported in 1967 as a separate entity, it concerned itself particularly with Quebec and the Maritimes. By 1969 it was



Bd. of Evangelism, 1976-77.
Seated: Rudy Boschmann, James Nikkel, Rudy Bartel, Peter Boschmann, Henry Brucks.
Standing: John Reimer, Danny Wolfe, H. H. Epp, Henry Unrau, Neil Klassen, Herb Neufeld, Peter Klassen, John Schmidt.

completely integrated with the Board of Evangelism* whose first secretary was J. J. Toews. (He was succeeded by Henry Brucks in 1975 and by James Nikkel in April 1982.)⁷

As executive secretary, Toews focused on the itinerary of the Conference evangelist, on personal evangelism, church growth clinics, and the strengthening of family life. Rudy Boschman, as Conference evangelist, conducted many campaigns across Canada, often teaming up with "the Messengers," whose origin we have noted. Brucks became secretary just as the vision of church growth and planting came to be widely accepted in the mid-seventies. He had a particular mandate with respect to Quebec. The results of that will be shown with reference to the creation of a Bible school at Ste. Rose in Laval. Nickel, beginning in 1982, infused a new vigor for his "mandate to witness across Canada." By this was meant expansion of the Conference to the Atlantic and in the nation's capital.⁸

From 1966 onwards, the Gospel Light Hour tried repeatedly to have the Canadian Conference take full responsibility for its radio operation. The attempts failed, and it remained essentially Manitoba's responsibility. There seems to have been some ambivalence about it in the late sixties. In 1968, Leonard Siemens had occasion to ask for a "clearer picture of the philosophy and long range plans for our radio and Home Missions work."

Is our Radio Ministry not essentially Home Missions? If it is, then how closely is the programming of both agencies co-ordinated, and why are they not administered by the same Committee? Furthermore, if our English language radio programs are beamed essentially to Manitoba audiences, is this the best investment of scarce resources in the light of the very rich diet of radio evangelism that most Manitoba listeners receive, exclusive of M.B. programming? If the Radio Ministry is not Home Missions, what then is the range of its broadcasting? Is it Canadawide, Worldwide? If it is either, is this not where the Canadian or General Conference should become financially and administratively involved?⁹

Implied was the question of empire-building, which we have noted elsewhere. Was the Gospel Light Hour really designed to enlarge Manitoba's outreach, and were people converted as a result and added to Manitoba churches? If not, would they be if the Gospel Light Hour were supported Canadawide? Perhaps it was the very thorough and somewhat critical self-evaluation of 1970, (as a result of which someone suggested that the Gospel Light Hour should be given back to free enterprise), that stifled the widespread, but still minority desire to see it go Conferencewide. Despite this disappointment, Mennonite Brethren Communications (MBC), as it was renamed in 1970, had sufficient support for its total operation by 1984 to launch upon an extensive building program complete with studios and offices, to cost about \$885,000, on the corner of Riverton and Brazier, one block east of MBBC and MBCI.¹⁰

* Board chairmen elected were John M. Schmidt (1967), George L. Braun (1969), Nick J. Dyck (1973), Rudy Bartel (1975), and Herb Neufeld (1979).

Theological Training

No attempt has been made to give a unified view of Mennonite Brethren theology, nor was it promised. Nor can we within the compass of these pages give a complete view of the theological ferment that convulsed these decades. We may assume that the distinctives of the Mennonite Brethren church were still held and that the Confession of Faith, which was revised in the 1960s, was the basic document presented to all congregations wishing to be affiliated with the Conference. We have, however, concerned ourselves throughout with the institutions that prepared home missions workers and church planters, though even here also we must severely limit our discussion.

During the fifties a considerable debate had already developed around the central question, did our institutions achieve the purpose for which they were created? With respect to Bible schools, G. W. Peters urged the "fostering of the mission spirit;" Walter Wiebe believed that Bible schools were needed for survival and retention of our heritage, as well as for that three-year maturation period in that environment. George Konrad in 1965 rejected the idea that they should become vocational schools, unless vocation referred to one's calling as a Christian supported by some suitable occupation. Though Konrad's view spoke of the ideal, Wieler in Saskatchewan had been facing the reality. He had discovered that seminary and college graduates could not be expected to enter, and certainly not stay, in home missions. Hence he expected Bible schools to be, again, the main supplier of workers. In a word, Bible schools should be distinctly occupational, at least in one dimension.



Mennonite Brethren Herald Editor Harold Jantz as seen in 1984.

About the time Wieler was thus returning to the Bible schools, Harold Jantz stated in conjunction with his theme "Frontier Revisited" that "our schools have done little to prepare young men for home missions." What he probably meant was that Bible schools had not included the degree of commitment to the task that was mandatory. Nor had schools done much to influence congregations towards commitment to home missions.

It does not matter which school Jantz may have had in mind at the time. Nevertheless in March 1967 he prepared

a significant editorial on the role of Bible schools. After acknowledging their strong contribution toward Christian maturation, he mentioned two concerns: the use to which Bible knowledge is put, such as proof-texting to test an opponent; and the apparent fuzziness about the role of the Bible school in some Bible school teachers' minds. Because such schools could not be all things to all men, but enjoyed much greater flexibility than say, the Bible College, he believed they should "work out programs that responded directly to the needs within the churches."¹¹

The impact of the Bible schools may be inferred by summarizing the 1963 findings of A. J. Klassen. Between 1940 and 1963, the enrollment in all Bible schools averaged 360 a year. According to Klassen's study, made before the restructuring of the Conference took place, the following percentages of Bible school graduates made up Conference committee membership: Evangelism, 100; CRC, 90; Education, 87; Sunday school, 88; CIM, 83; Publications, 82; MBBC, 73; Youth, 63; Trustees, 45. Of missionaries abroad, 90 percent were alumni, home mission workers, 86 [the author's research suggests 94]; Sunday school workers, 67; church school teachers, 66; and ordained ministers lowest at 59. That is, those who managed the finances and property of the Conference and those who filled the pulpits ranked lowest in the scale of those who had attended Bible school.

MBBC statistics for approximately the same period, 1944 to 1969, have not been as helpful on the point of home missions. In the twenty-fifth anniversary booklet there is no home missions category under "Past and Present Service." Of 495 returns, the following breakdown appears: Preaching, 173; Teaching, 274; Music, 158; Administration, 98; and Special Mission, 203. As we have noted, Leslie Stobbe in 1954 made it a point to survey the categories for which the College was created: preparation for Bible school teaching, for home mission under the CIM, for service abroad and pastoral ministry at home (see p. 30).¹²

It was about this time that a lamentable concatenation of problems surfaced in Mennonite Brethren training institutions. Instead of being able to rise to the challenge to plant churches that confronted the Canadian and provincial Conferences, much energy was consumed with controversy about roles, status, location, and philosophy of Christian education. The "seminary question" was on the conference agenda for more than a decade until final agreement was reached in the early 1970s that there would be one seminary, located in Fresno. Not unrelated to that question was the struggle within MBBC that consumed the years between 1967 and 1971, when a president resigned and an academic dean set conditions for continuation of employment. It all had to do with a core curriculum, a Bachelor of Divinity program, and honest differences. The *Mennonite Brethren Herald* editor intervened, and MBBC seemed to be paralyzed as support from the constituency declined.¹³

While attention was being focused on the Seminary and the College, Winkler Bible Institute became embroiled in a controversy triggered by a general statement entitled "Philosophy of a Bible School," prepared by Brandon's Peter G. Klassen. At first it seemed to have general approval within board and faculty. Consequently Don Wiebe and Herb Swartz, academic deans, worked out "an integrated Bible Institute and Bible College program." A reaction set in,

however, when the board contemplated the implementation of the 1967 statement. It was told that henceforth "the search for the truth" would be arrived at by "open confrontation among students and teachers." The outworking of the new philosophy promised "a critical examination of contemporary thinking. . . ." Following many board meetings to try to resolve the problem, four teachers and four board members resigned, and H. R. Baerg replaced John Goossen as principal. What followed for WBI was a decade of heart-searching and embarrassing re-evaluation.¹⁴

While these controversies were consuming many hours and weakening the brotherhood, it seems that those concerned about church planting simply bypassed them with a missiology borrowed from the outside, as D. E. Redekop complained in 1968. The seminary in Fresno seemed best able to cope with the new theory of church growth and planting, and was least shaken by the controversies.

Church Growth

Ben Doerksen from Bethany Bible Institute at Hepburn summed up the new missiology for *Mennonite Brethren Herald* readers in a rather belated article in 1982 entitled "Is 'church growth' for us?" It is a fairly recent phenomenon. Donald A. McGavran, the acknowledged founder, came to international attention when he wrote several books on the subject in the 1950s. Not long after setting up a church growth institute in Eugene, Oregon, he was invited to move that institute (in 1965) to the campus of Fuller Theological Seminary.

Whereas McGavran essentially focused on foreign missions in the so-called post missionary era, Peter Wagner shifted the focus to North America in the early 1970s. In that year, to show how it caught on, Dwight Wiebe, earlier associated with the founding of Mennonite Brethren Christian Service in 1960, produced "An Action Plan for Church Growth" with reference to the Mennonite Brethren. Within the compass of fourteen pages, giving charts and activity suggestions, and a clear set of goals, he gave every Christian Service worker and church planter a "how-to" packet on growth that promised self-support within ten years.

It seemed precisely this kind of pre-packaged working plan of goals, fixed timetables, professional promotionalism, and "personal and corporate commitment" that led to the criticism that this was a seemingly "cold scientific approach." Doerksen and many other Mennonite Brethren, however, attended seminars under both Wagner and McGavran and came away as converts to the system.

Obviously something was needed, especially when the results from the Mission Church era were not at all that glowing. In order to succeed, church planters must set realistic goals, but goals there must be, and the results could be phenomenal. At least in some areas they were said to be surprising. Though Dwight Wiebe's 1972 "Action Plan" was not that different from Elmo Warkentin's in 1964, it became clear that, in the last analysis, everything depended on the quality of the church planter and church growth leader, and on the degree to which members of their congregations could be disciplined to support them. While it was evident that the Seminary was able to graduate a surprising number of church planters who found places in British Columbia, Alberta, and Ontario, it was evident in the 1970s that even

those who never had a chance to attend seminary soon adopted the new missiology as the wave of the future. Henry Brucks, for example, who became evangelism secretary in 1975, took the new thinking into his relationship with the Quebec association and into his subsequent ministry as Conference pastor.¹⁵

Church planting signified a remarkable shift away from trying to build churches by beginning work with children, as in the Mission Church Era. It meant that outreach henceforth would be to suburban neighbors who in the 1970s saw in the Mennonite Brethren those who had arrived — assimilated, prosperous, professionalized — a peer group with whom they could identify. Church planting was easily rationalized theologically, and its early fruits in the right setting and with sufficient promotionalism seemed to be successful. The question left hanging in the early frontier period and until after World War Two about whether church and mission could be one was now being answered in the affirmative. Every congregation must grow by conversion of peoples coming from within and from outside. If it does, it will result in enlargements of congregations to be served by a very popular-style multiple ministry (as at Willingdon) or by divisions, by mothering, or by planting daughter churches as in Ontario.

How this could affect even an old congregation, thought to be very traditional, may be seen in Tofield. There, under the leadership of radio preacher John M. Schmidt, Tofield Church became a community church, still sited in the same community, but now reaching out to both the assimilated Mennonites and other families living on acreages between Tofield and Edmonton, eighty kilometers to the west. The Tofield church of today would be almost unrecognizable to the fathers who first built it in the 1930s.¹⁶

The Church Planter James Nikkel

The person who took the new missiology most seriously and studied it at Fuller to the doctoral level was James Nikkel, who succeeded Brucks as evangelism secretary in 1982. Nikkel is the son of J. J. Nikkel, who worked at Ostervick in the 1940s. James is a graduate of Winkler, MBBC's Bachelor of Divinity program, the University of Manitoba, and, in 1982, of Fuller's Doctor of Ministry program. His doctoral thesis covers the entire gamut of the subject, theologically and biblically, with the history of the Anabaptist and Mennonite Brethren churches in mind. He applied his study to the personal preparation of the church planter and to his motivation. He

wrote, "Unless the church planter is appropriately motivated he will not endure the rigorous exercise of planting a new church." But those in any age who are obedient, grateful, evangelistic, socially concerned, renewal-oriented, good stewards themselves, and desirous of seeing growth, will see the tremendous opportunities. One may infer that others likely will not.¹⁷

Nikkel has tried, first in Manitoba and now in the wider arena of the Canadian Conference, to bring the ideas and opportunities of church growth and planting to all churches. Pamphlets have been prepared in Winnipeg by what is now called the Church Growth Evangelism office of the Mennonite Brethren Conference. Acutely aware of the potential in publicity and promotional material, in January 1984, as he had done earlier in Manitoba, he produced the first issue of a new evangelism paper entitled *Evangelism Canada*. The first article, appropriately entitled "Church Growth: Mania, Myth or Mandate," is by Kenneth J. Dyck, then of Nutana Church in Saskatoon. Dyck, who was recognized as a successful practitioner of the art of church growth, has taken up the challenge of planting a church in the nation's capital, Ottawa. Nikkel also prepared an elaborate feasibility study for church planting in the Atlantic provinces. George Wiens of Dartmouth assisted him in this study. To further show his ambitious plans, in 1984 the Conference issue of the *Mennonite Brethren Herald* (an annual event since the 1960s) not only announced plans for Ottawa and proclaimed the creation of a sixth provincial Conference in Quebec in 1984 but also foresaw that by the end of this century, a seventh Conference might be formed out of the creation of Mennonite Brethren churches in the Maritimes.¹⁸

In 1982 at the Manitoba conference, recognition was given to James and Elfrieda Nikkel for their ministry, especially for putting Manitoba "Missions and Church Extension on the map," through their Northern Venture (1970-77). The citation read,

Starting churches in the north was getting to be the normal thing for James and Elfrieda. However, when they moved to Winnipeg, the new challenge was to start churches in areas of greater population right here in the south. James was instrumental in the starting of a church in Altona, as well as assisting in the organization of the Westwood Church, where he is a member.¹⁹

VIII

THE CHURCH PLANTING ERA IN THE PROVINCES, 1960 - 1983

A. Quebec

The Unknown East

Until now we have been writing about areas quite familiar to most Mennonite Brethren — Ontario and the western provinces, including British Columbia. A general knowledge of the political, economic, and cultural development of these areas has been assumed. But we cannot assume as much when we write about those regions of the country east of Ontario — Quebec, the Maritimes, and Newfoundland. With respect to Quebec, most Mennonites have taken an all-too English view and, regarding the Atlantic provinces — Canada's true east — they have betrayed a great deal of indifference or, at best, a tourist's interest. To most Westerners, "the East" still means Ontario or Ottawa. Because church planting in the East is a late growth and interest, very little has been written about the East in the Mennonite press or in the yearbooks. In fact, the author is in the embarrassing position of having to resort to articles he himself has written about Mennonites in the Maritimes.

When we come to Quebec, it will be as important to explain the "Quiet Revolution" to Mennonite Brethren in the West as to explain to Quebecois how the Mennonite Brethren arrived on their doorstep in 1961. Mennonites have known rather vaguely that the French were one of the founding races and therefore entitled to a privileged position in Canadian political and cultural life. But they did not know that in 1957 prospects for ambitious French Canadians were still very bleak. They held only 6.7 percent of the elite positions in the country even though they represented 33 percent of the national population. Only 10 percent of Canada's elite were Roman Catholic, though 40 percent of all Canadians held that faith. No wonder there were rising vocal demands in Quebec to correct this imbalance in Canadian public life. Yet there followed a decade or more when Mennonites asked with the same mystification as many other Canadians, what does Quebec want?

The story since the crisis of 1970 is well known. Quebec nationalism surged; French Canadians demanded and got a more equal opportunity in politics, business, and the civil service. Their political leaders then forged on to take a course in the direction of unilingualism and separatism that many have deplored.¹

The Invasion of Quebec

Before we undertake to survey the church planting in Quebec, we need to show how the Mennonite Brethren arrived at St. Jerome and Ste. Thérèse, to explain the remarkable phenomenon of the ex-missionaries to the Belgian Congo, and to suggest how it was possible for evangelical witness to flourish in the 1960s. Long before the 1960s Mennonite Brethren were aware of at least one evangelical institution in Quebec, namely Bethel Bible Institute at Lennoxville, a

predominantly English area. Numerous Canadian missionaries on their way to a French-speaking mission field such as the Belgian Congo would take preliminary studies in French at



Launching a work in Quebec (early 1960s).
Ernest Dyck and Henry Warkentin at conference.

Lennoxville before proceeding to Brussels. Among these were Ernest and Lydia Dyck of South Abbotsford. While living in Lennoxville in 1951-52, they became conscious of Quebec as an area for evangelical witness. Henry Warkentin, the chairman of CIM made a first investigative trip to Quebec in 1959 but stated at the time that "our attention was directed to Quebec in 1957, when some initial contacts were made."

At that time, conveniently, Warkentin was pursuing the question of Protestantism in Quebec for a B.D. thesis at Waterloo Lutheran Seminary. "It was this which led me to gather background material and get information from the various Protestant branches in Quebec, including Baptists." Though he recalled that his first report to Conference in 1960 was well-received, he asked "for another year or more detailed study and planning before establishing a work."

In 1961 he took Ernest Dyck and Henry H. Voth with him. These are the brethren who recommended to the Conference that a work should be launched. Ernest and Lydia Dyck, who were among those missionaries evacuated from the Belgian Congo in 1960 as a result of a rebellion against the Belgian government, were the first workers chosen for Quebec. They settled in St. Jerome, fifty kilometers north of Montreal.²

Seen from one point of view, the painful loss, even if only temporary, of the Belgian Congo as a Mennonite Brethren mission field, (when sixty missionaries were brought home) became a primary gain to Canadian home missions. Ernest and Lydia Dyck were not the only couple prepared in terms of language facility to step into a new opportunity in French Canada. Six other couples, three from the Belgian Congo and three who had worked in other French-speaking African fields, found their way to Quebec. The Clyde Shannons, the

Ben Klassens, and the Henry Derksens were from the Congo; The Ben Dycks, the René Hainauts, and the Danny Wolfes were from other missions.

This represented a strong component in the history of Mennonite Brethren assistance to the first decade of work in Quebec. There is a strong parallel here with the beginnings of home mission in Canada by the *Russlaender* immigrants of the years 1923 to 1927. They left the Soviet Union equipped with the German and Russian languages and eventually began to utilize them as well as English when they felt ready for it. Similarly, the ex-missionaries to the Congo devoted their linguistic qualifications in French to French Canada.³

The "Quiet Revolution"

In all the reports given to the Canadian Conference or prepared for the Mennonite press, hardly anyone has dealt adequately with the sociological and economic context in which the evangelical movement took root. There are suggestions that such analyses will be forthcoming where they ought to originate, among the Quebecois themselves. Until recently, however, when reports have touched on the existential question at all, Quebec has been presented as an almost monolithic citadel of rather unholy Roman Catholicism. Dyck is quoted as having said when he was a student at Lennoxville: "Thank the Lord, that He has called us to Africa and not to Quebec." Many likened Quebec to Franco's Spain, a tough mission field. Everything was seen and evaluated in spiritual terms. Catholics were not Christians and needed to be born again.

Henry Warkentin at least had done some background research. When he surveyed the existing evangelicals in Quebec south of the St. Lawrence River, he found, actually, that church planting was not altogether unpromising. If his report accurately reflected the situation north of the St. Lawrence, however, then Quebec evangelicals were a hard-pressed minority, and French-speaking evangelists, most desirable, were scarce. In fact, most evangelicals were from "the common working class. Many have little education and see little need for it. It is therefore hard to persuade them of the necessity of Bible training in preparation for Christian work. . . ."

Warkentin's view of the economic situation was equally discouraging. "The French are not very aggressive and are soon content with the status quo. As a result they are generally not well-to-do. . . ." Either matters have changed dramatically in two decades, or one must be careful of this analysis as it seems to have presupposed a view of all Catholics derived from Max Weber's thesis: "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism." It is all too easy to make invidious comparisons on such grounds.⁴

While one may not entirely discount the spiritual and Weberian evaluation of the Quebecois, there is another side that has not been told. Quebec society was in fact changing profoundly. The official church was shaken and split by the reforms initiated by Pope John XXIII and Vatican II. Also, the Liberal provincial government of Jean Lesage benefited greatly from the massive reaction to the former Duplessis regime (the *Union Nationale*) of seventeen years, in which part of the church was implicated. The "winds of change" blowing across Africa and, in some instances, sending missionaries scurrying, also blew over Quebec, a society that

may be perceived from one point of view, as having had a colonial status.

Fortunately, there were those who had tried to bring understanding to what was happening in Quebec. Rudy Wiebe, as *Mennonite Brethren Herald* editor, published an analytical article by a Baptist preacher named W. Ewin. He saw two polarities: anti-clericalism (which he compared to earlier French anti-clericalism) and the monolithic, unchanging and undivided church. The two great dangers facing evangelicals, according to this view, were either a Romanist authoritarian state or a communist takeover as in Cuba! When Wiebe showed the article to Ernest Dyck before publication, Dyck agreed that Ewin gave "the facts as they exist in the province today."

To this article there was a sharp reaction from a long-time resident in Montreal, and a direct descendant of an early Mennonite Brethren leader. B. A. Warkentin did not believe that a communist threat was real, though we now know that the FLQ (*Front de libération du Québec*) was organized by 1963. Nor did he agree with Ewin's view of the church as monolithic. In fact, he destroyed Ewin's position by pointing out that the revolt in Quebec had come from within the church, that one segment of the church was following Cardinal Leger, a liberalizer and freedom-bringer by any standard. Warkentin wrote: "[Ewin] fails to make the point that the Roman Catholic Church has divisions quite like the Mennonite church." The reaction to B. A. Warkentin's letter was sharp and actually turned on the editor for publishing it.⁵

It is now all too apparent that the somewhat unyielding anti-Catholicism among Mennonites led the Mennonite Brethren to simplistic opinions and solutions. The literature about the church and the "quiet revolution" coming out of Quebec itself shows that B. A. Warkentin was closer to the true state of things than the arguments for the monolithic view. Most Mennonites will never have heard of Frère Untel's *The Impertinences of Brother Anonymous*. This book was first published in 1960, in French. It consisted of the reproduced letters to a liberal press written by a priest in the 1950s. Peter Desbarats, a well-known journalist, has called this "the most important single expression of discontent with Quebec's system of education, and a primary factor in creating an element of popular opinion favorable to reform." Brother Anonymous had predicted large-scale "disaffection of the French people from their religion . . . and that young people are as far from Christianity as they can go without making a commotion [against the church's educational authorities]" Anonymous scored his own people for their language of *joual* — a despicable disregard for well-spoken grammatical dignified French. How can a people, a culture, survive if they are careless about language.⁶

Within the Quebec Catholic church there were many divisions and other elements that helped to bring freedom and allowed Lesage to take control of education. Desbarats explained that the Quebec church was "a patch-work of semi-independent dioceses," and the bishop's control over his institutions was least strong in the greater Montreal area. Vatican II helped to divide the church into reactionaries and progressives such as Cardinal Leger. Whereas in the nineteenth century the papacy had fought against anti-clericalism and tended to destroy all liberal ideas, in twentieth-century Quebec there were Catholic institutions, like Laval University,

that opposed the authoritarian politician, Duplessis, who wanted to control the universities.

This view of a vulnerable church is brought out in many subsequent studies. It became most apparent in the struggle of the working class against Duplessis as seen in the October (asbestos) strike of 1949. This social and political event divided the church, as one segment supported the workers. A sociological study edited by Dale Thomson included a chapter by Abbé Norbert Lacoste. He pointed out that the "triumphal period" of the Roman church in Quebec was long since over, and that since 1940 it had been buffeted by the "twofold cultural revolution, the lay Quiet Revolution and its religious counterpart," spearheaded by John XXIII. His analysis of the radical changes "in the religious attitudes and behavior of the faithful" threw up five categories: the conformists, the ritualists, the innovative, the rebels, and the withdrawn. Among the "rebels" he saw the "new local groups and members of what the Americans call the 'underground church,'" those who wanted to "return to Christ." Those rebels were only one segment, however, of those looking for "freedom, pleasure, creativity, and self-fulfillment." Many felt alienated and wanted to rid themselves of that feeling by participating in "a creative manner in society."⁷

Much of this analysis has been confirmed in discussion with the young Quebecois leadership of the Mennonite Brethren association in Montreal. That leadership, whose average age was about thirty in 1982, is part of that "rebel" category seen by Lacoste. They surfaced during the revival of 1972-73, to be discussed in the next section. Jean Théoret, now principal of *Institut Biblique Laval* (IBL), confirmed that Quebec nationalism helped to foster the destabilization of Quebec society, especially since 1949. Strikes, violence, and student agitation generated within Quebec (without

conspirational connections) were marks of those days. Also, the secularization of society was quite advanced, far more than the investigative brethren of 1960 had seen. Quebecois exulted in a new-found freedom to think, speak, and agitate. Vatican II did much to liberalize life in the church. Théoret gave two examples: the francization of the mass, and the removal of such rules as "no breakfast before mass." If one can eat breakfast first, perhaps one does not need to go to mass at all!⁸

An almost wholesale rejection of the past by youth opened the door for the Mennonite Brethren church, though the harvest of youth did not come until the early seventies. Pierre Wingender was one of those rebels. From a St. Eustache family, he was a "practicing Catholic until the age of fifteen." Then, at the moment of the October crisis of 1970, he, along with many others, rebelled "against society and government." This was a time, Normand Rochen wrote recently, of "great upheaval of traditional values in Quebec, the student rebellion, major technological changes, the shedding of the authority of church and school." The story of how Wingender and his generation, with the fortuitous help of Ernest Dyck and others, created a new church of first generation fervency has become part of Canadian Mennonite Brethren history.⁹

This upheaval in many ways parallels the separation from the Catholic church in the sixteenth century and from the Mennonite *ecclesia* in Russia about 1860. This was brought home to the author in 1983 when seated around the well-laden table of Mr. and Mrs. J.-G. Roy in Ste. Thérèse. As Pierre and Louise Wingender translated, the Roys indicated they wished to relate the story of their conversion. As they did so, the author was reminded that their story sounded much like that of the first-generation Anabaptist-Mennonite converts of the sixteenth century. Quite unaware that this parallel had occurred so long ago under not entirely dissimilar circumstances, the Roys were amazed to hear, even if briefly, an account of those early beginnings of our spiritual forebears and the persecutions they endured for their convictions about a believers' church putting the gospel into action.

Gerald Janzen has more recently drawn attention to this parallel in the pages of the *Mennonite Brethren Herald*. He also has drawn out parallels between the early Mennonite Brethren in Russia and their first-generation fervency, their short-lived excessive enthusiasms, and also the important contribution made by the women who, as in Quebec, "gossiped the Gospel."¹⁰

Ernest Dyck

While the detailed history of the Mennonite Brethren church in Quebec must await some historian from that church, we may briefly bring into the context of the larger Canadian Conference the story of how that church had its beginnings. If any one person can be said to have determined the direction of its first decade, it is Ernest Dyck. Not only was he the dominant person among those who had returned from service in Africa, he also became the prime mover among Quebecois in directing the spreading church in developing a system of discipling converts.

In many ways, Dyck's role in Quebec was comparable to



Ste. Thérèse, Quebec (July 1983).
Pierre and Louise Wingender and their son; Mr. and Mrs. J.-G. Roy, St. Thérèse members.



**St. Jerome, Quebec (early 1970s).
Ernest Dyck and David Franco in conversation**

James Nikkel's in Manitoba. What the latter did in Manitoba's The Pas became the measuring rod for everything else in the Northern Venture. What Dyck did as pastor, planter, teacher, and discipler became for a decade the touchstone of the expanding work. He established the "pilot project" for evangelism in 1966, for example, by an investigative trip when he took with him Ben Dyck and Don Balzer, of whom we will say more. That set the tone. It was evangelical, fundamentalist, evangelistic. The following account of the various church plantings and the development of the Institut Biblique Laval will bring out Dyck's role, highlight some of the controversies and disappointments, as well as tell of the notable advances in the evangelical cause in Quebec.¹¹

St. Jerome

Ernest and Lydia Dyck had been involved in mission from early youth. Both attended Bible school in Clearbrook and MBBC. Following language study, they served on the Mennonite Brethren field in the Congo from the mid fifties until 1960. With the help of Henry Warkentin and the CIM they decided on St. Jerome, partly because this city had an English-language school for their children. The Dycks were, after all, only "on loan" for two years, at first. Also, St. Jerome was a growth area that had thirty thousand inhabitants at that time.

Beginning with Norman Buchanan's "Quebec every home crusade" from Lennoxville, the Dycks canvassed all of St. Jerome, getting acquainted with people, language, and culture. Within eight weeks they were ready to begin with Sunday services, and three years later (1964) the Canadian Conference took in the first church from Quebec. As the report stated, "Sixteen adults from three language groups joined hands and hearts to become members of the church. . . ." These consisted of English-speaking teachers, mostly from Vineland, and Martha Wall, who were struggling to learn the language; French-speaking Quebecois; and Portuguese speaking Protestants. This group became the standard bearer in Quebec for nearly a decade, and this was the congregation to which the Dycks were asked to return in

1982 when it was a self-supporting congregation of seventy-four members.¹²

One of the first things Dyck learned was that the Mennonite Brethren Church would have to be incorporated in Quebec in order to assure Quebecois on one fundamental concern: the security and validity of vital records such as the registration of births, baptisms, marriages, and burials. This was still a church responsibility in 1961. Protestant churches required legal status in order to issue prerequisite certificates. To show how open Quebec was, in St. Jerome, Dyck received the requisite "legal book," the officially-approved register, without first being incorporated. Nevertheless, after due preparation and in conjunction with the Mennonite Church in Quebec, the Quebec Legislature on February 7, 1962, under a private member's bill, authorized these two churches to act as official registrars. Only by achieving legal status, Dyck explained, would Quebecois have confidence in the people who had brought them the Gospel.¹³

Dyck's role changed considerably when he and Lydia contemplated a return to Zaire in 1965. In anticipation of the move, they made provision for St. Jerome by placing an associate pastor there. When they did not return to Zaire, however, this circumstance set Dyck free to plant churches in neighboring towns and to supervise those who were shepherding the new congregations.

As Dyck became church-planter, first in St. Thérèse and then in St. Laurent, he left much of the shepherding at St. Jerome to Don Balzer who resided in Ste Thérèse. The Balzers came from Saskatchewan in 1964 to prepare themselves for ongoing service in Quebec. Because they were still becoming bilingual and Ste Thérèse was still tied to St. Jerome administratively until 1968, Dyck was in effect the senior pastor of both congregations. Dyck expanded his influence by sending David Franco as a student from Jerome to Lennoxville where he had become a guest lecturer.

After a few years Balzer was replaced at Jerome by a senior man René Hainaut. He too had been a missionary in Zaire for eighteen years, but not under the Mennonite Brethren. He brought his family to Jerome in April 1969 and was installed as pastor in June. He became most enthusiastic about prospects in Quebec. "The main reason," he stated, "is the change in the Roman Catholic Church. Many have ceased to attend church. Others ridicule it. Some are angry because the change amounts to an admission that they were deceived. . . ."



**St. Laurent, P.Q. (April 1975).
Baptism conducted by David Franco, left.**

A year later eighteen persons were baptized. Though Hainaut was elected as the first chairman of the Quebec association, something went wrong. Nick Dyck of the Board of Evangelism reported in 1975 only that "after a year of internal struggle, the church is growing in stability and spiritual maturity." In 1975 David Franco returned from his studies to become the pastor of his home church. He became an active church planter, helping Ernest Dyck in St. Laurent and starting Bible studies in the tourist town of St. Donat in the Laurentian hills.¹⁴

Ste Thérèse

At first Ste. Thérèse was an extension of Jerome. But Ste. Thérèse became the more significant mothering church as it gave off members to St. Laurent, St. Eustache and Ste. Rose. The city lies just north of the Island of Laval, near the *Autoroute* to the north. Hence it is much closer to Montreal than is Jerome.

After the revival broke out in 1972-73 in Ste. Thérèse, and young Quebecois leadership took over from the returned missionaries, the major thrust would be on the periphery of Montreal proper. In August 1962, Clyde and Elizabeth



Ste. Thérèse (1963).
Clyde and Elizabeth Shannon and their group. David and Liette Franco are on steps on the right.

(Lémière) Shannon came to Ste. Thérèse, as associates of the Dycks. Shannon grew up in Iowa, graduated from Moody, and then went to the Congo in about 1938 under the Unevangelized Fields Mission. The Shannons were accepted as missionaries of the MB/BFM in 1951. Hence, the Shannons knew the Dycks from the Congo. Shannon described how they began in a house: "... the group became too numerous for the home where the French Canadians sat in the kitchen and other nationalities sat in the front room, while I stood in the doorway to bring the message."

Working in tandem with the Dycks in Quebec turned out rather uneven. Ernest and Clyde seemed to have differing concepts of discipling a congregation. Dyck wanted a firm organization while Shannon was more relaxed about such

matters. When Dyck had his way, the Shannons left for the Mennonite church at Joliette. Dyck then took responsibility for Ste Thérèse, until Don Balzer came and moved into the house vacated by the Shannons.

Meanwhile, the Ben Klassens, also home from Zaire, moved to the area and helped with the teaching ministry. Another missionary couple, the Ben Dycks, home from West Africa, having served under the Gospel Missionary Union, came to Ste. Thérèse in 1966. Ben Dyck took over the radio program known as "*Le Chant Joyeux*." After he was appointed pastor in Ste. Thérèse in 1967, Ben brought the congregation to a status independent of Jerome. When he resigned in 1970, Ernest took over again and was present as pastor during the crucial years of the Ste. Thérèse revival.¹⁵

The story of the spiritual dynamic at work in Ste. Thérèse between 1969 and 1975 has not been told until recently. Official reports did not highlight the revival, if indeed the significance of it could be appreciated at that time. Claudette LeBlanc and Gerald Janzen identified the school year 1972-73 as the crisis period in the lives of Quebec's future leadership.

About 1969, Guy Lavoie came back to Ste. Thérèse from Prince George where he had been converted. Lavoie was one of the rebels of the 1960s, a seeming ne'er-do-well, who had been asked to leave home. Now, however, he had come back, a self-taught Bible student. Still looking like a hippie, as reported, he began to work the streets where he found his old friends, among them *CEGEP* students. One of his first converts was Robert Dagenais (a drug addict) who later became Mennonite Brethren pastor at St. Eustache. Another was Jean Théoret, pastor at Ste. Thérèse only a few years later and now principal of *IBL*. Others were Robert Toupin, C. LeClerc, Pierre Wingender, Marcel Beauchamp, and Jean-Victor Brosseau. Nearly all are in leadership positions in the Quebec church today.

As Ernest Dyck was the resident pastor, the responsibility for discipling these believers, including their leader, Lavoie, fell on him. The latter, though an intense and successful evangelist, did not yet have settled habits, at least not according to middle class standards. More importantly, as Dyck taught them the Scriptures, these young men wanted to be baptized. Because they were sons of upper and middle class families of staunch Catholic faith, but who had strayed about as far



Ste. Thérèse, Quebec (June 1979).
Jean Théoret and Pierre Wingender, Quebec leaders.

as Frère Untel had predicted they would, Dyck insisted they obtain permission from their parents. Many parents gave permission when they saw that their sons' lives had been radically altered. They now had settled habits, "different goals, and showed good Christian behavior," besides a willingness to be persecuted for their faith. The young men who would come forward quickly as leaders and pastors were Théoret, Wingender, Dagenais, and André Bourque. Guy Lavoie found employment in Jerome where he continued to be a "fearless witness." Whereas they had been a fraternity of the street, they were now "a group bound together by a commitment to the Gospel as protégés of Ernest Dyck." Eventually they would take the leadership reins themselves.

Out of this school of disciples developed the concept of a disciplined course of studies for evangelism. Because, like Dyck himself as a young man in South Abbotsford or Henry Brucks in Yarrow or A. H. Redekopp in Winkler, they wanted to do something, Ernest taught them soul-winning. This led after some years to the notion of a Bible school, though opinions would differ as to its size and curriculum. Equally important, many people, once all this was "noised abroad," began to come to the Ste. Thérèse church. The changed lives were now talked about in town, and the revival brought considerable excitement. The power of the gospel was being demonstrated.



Ste. Therese, Quebec (1981).
Henry and Helen Derksen, pastoral couple.

Following the revival, when about thirty were baptized, membership in Ste. Thérèse grew to fifty-four. Jean Théoret, a young convert, was appointed associate pastor of this vibrant congregation. When he left to further his education at MBBC and MBBS, it was fitting that Henry and Helen Derksen should come to minister here from 1978 to 1983.

The church had to be enlarged in order to accommodate all the people. By 1982 there were 118 members in spite of the fact that some members left to help Laurent get started, a dozen went to Eustache in 1977, and 14 went to Rose a year later. Prominent in this congregation was the Marcel Caron family who became visible not only there but in the Canadian Conference also.¹⁶



Ste. Thérèse family and church leaders (1980s).
The Marcel Caron family: Francis, Anne, Yves, Marcel, Mario, Yolande.

St. Laurent

Ernest Dyck began door to door visitation in St. Laurent in September 1967. He distributed literature and followed up contacts made through "Sermons from Science" at EXPO 67. He began Bible studies in an office and Sunday services in June 1968. He was assisted during summer months by David Franco while the latter was a student at Bethel in Lennoxville. A church was formed there and accepted into the Conference on December 30, 1969. During 1971-72, Danny and Gladys Wolfe came to work in Quebec. After one year at Laurent they took up the challenge of a new work at Ste. Agathe-des-Monts. Jean Tremblay, a graduate of BBI in Lennoxville also worked there for five months in 1973.

All this time Dyck was supervising this work from Ste. Thérèse. After what were called "struggling years" by André Bourque, Pierre Wingender became pastor in 1975. He had been baptized only three years earlier. He came from St. Eustache and, as the story has been told, had encountered Guy Lavoie and Ernest Dyck at Thérèse while he was a CEGEP student. There he was baptized and had his apprenticeship for ministry. Though many very young believers aged seventeen to eighteen were added to the Laurent church, there was a crisis in 1979. Bourque wrote of this:

Pierre and his wife, Louise, were heartbroken and asked God for wisdom to deal with the situation. God showed them that unless these young people were taught how to build their

lives on the Word of God, they would not be able to continue in the faith. Soon after this Pierre organized a team to disciple the new believers. Since that time the church has grown rapidly.¹⁷



Quebec brethren, 1983.
Gilles Théoret, left, and André Bourque, Quebec Association moderator, 1983, & St. Laurent Pastor.

When Wingender left to attend MBBS in Fresno, he was succeeded by André Bourque and his wife, Francine. Bourque, an early graduate of *IBL*, comes from a business family whose parents did not give permission for him to be baptized. In his ministry, nevertheless, he continued the method of discipling or shepherding new believers. The church had grown amazingly, and in 1982 it had sixty-seven members. Though the congregation has been meeting in a school, there are plans to build a church. Bourque has become a familiar component of the Quebec delegation at Canadian Conferences by his simultaneous translation for his unilingual colleagues such as Robert Dagenais.¹⁸

Ste. Agathe-des-Monts

As stated, after a year at Laurent, the Wolfes found support for their initiative in Ste. Agathe in the Laurentians. In short order, they organized a church on June 20, 1973 with eleven members. The Wolfes came from Saskatchewan. After graduation from Steinbach and Briercrest, respectively, they served in Africa with the Gospel Missionary Union for some years. When the board in Winnipeg felt that the work in Ste. Agathe was not getting the wanted response, it withdrew support, but not before the work could be turned over to the Alliance church, under whose aegis Danny and Gladys continued.¹⁹

St. Eustache

Though the St. Eustache congregation, organized in January 1977, is now associated with Robert and Rita Dagenais, behind it stood the family of Wingender. Norman Rochon has told the story of how Pierre was one to rebel against all authority at the age of fifteen. He adopted the philosophy of the "*felquiste*" and became a member of a cell



St. Eustache (1981).
Robert Dagenais, pastor, St. Eustache.

group "without reserve and without restraint." Eventually in his search he took to drugs. He went away to the States and, like the prodigal, into a "far country," where certain circumstances helped him to "find himself." He returned to his family and enrolled in the CEGEP in Ste. Thérèse, where he met Lavoie, Théoret, and Dyck. In December 1971, at age nineteen, he was converted and then baptized seven months later in the Ste. Thérèse church. His brother Eric was also converted and baptized. Fortunately, their mother Madelaine Wingender was prepared by God to listen to her sons' testimony. She could not help but be impressed by the change that had come over the boys. When she began to drive them to church so they could attend Dyck's services, she also began to attend and was converted and baptized in February 1973. When her husband was converted also, the St. Eustache church was born, so to speak, and meetings began in their home.²⁰

Ernest Dyck was blessed with discernment for the gifts of his new workers. One example is Robert Dagenais, one of the converts of 1972-73 who did not entertain theological studies. Dyck, however, saw in him the gift of teaching and ministering. Until then he had been working as a cook at the Ste. Thérèse CEGEP. Upon Dyck's urging, however, Dagenais accepted the invitation to serve the young group of believers meeting in the Wingender house.

At first, St. Eustache was treated as an extension of Ste. Thérèse, but the church, organized in January 1977, joined the Quebec association later in that year. The growth there has been quite rapid, from forty-two members in 1979 to eighty-two in 1982. From the viewpoint of the Francophones in St. Eustache, the support given from "the West" for a building project has been quite overwhelming, like something out of "science fiction." By 1982 they had built a high quality commodious sanctuary and dedicated it to community outreach.²¹

Ste. Rose

The story of Ste. Rose Mennonite Brethren Church is more complicated and checkered because of its intimate association with the project of a Bible school as conceived by Henry Brucks, who became evangelism secretary in 1975. (The reader should know that he was a missionary in the Congo also.) Though an attempt at saturation evangelism was attempted in Ste. Rose, Laval, in 1967, nothing seems to have come of this until about 1976 when Brucks announced to the Canadian Conference that the United Church there had been purchased for the purpose of launching "the Bible



**IBL, the former Ste. Rose United Church Building.
IBL Opening in 1976.**

Institute of Quebec," or *IBL*. This appeared to be rather sudden. It was a not-so-quiet-revolution! The formulation of such a concept and the question of property involving about eighty thousand dollars are normally referred to the Conference. But this was treated as an emergency and it was for such interconference emergencies that the Council of Boards was created. About sixty brethren therefore made this momentous decision to launch a Bible school. Why?²²

The occasion and the rationale are not hard to discover. Brucks had visited Quebec several times, for the first time in November 1974 and again in the summer of 1975 on the occasion of a youth gathering. Impressed with the large numbers and their first-generation fervency, he wondered how the potential leadership among them would be trained. This fervency was brought home to him in 1975 when he had an accident and was hospitalized briefly in St. Jerome. In one weekend, as many as 120 people visited him, consoling him with Bible verses and totally exhausting him in the process.

Duly impressed, he tried to persuade Dyck that Quebec needed a Bible school. Dyck resisted this at first, but when



**Ste. Rose family and conference leader (1980s).
Jean-Marc Nantel and family: Lucie, Paul, Christian, Juliette,
Denise, Sylvain, Jean-Marc, Martin.**

Brucks persisted, Dyck just happened to know that a United Church property was for sale in Ste. Rose. That is how the vision and the reality were brought together.

Once the *IBL* had been started in 1976 with Dyck as the first president, the overflow from Ste. Thérèse began to use the new Ste. Rose church for Sunday services. This is how a church was organized here in 1978 with seventeen members. Just as the Ste. Thérèse church had some remarkable conversions, so also did Ste. Rose. Jean-Marc Nantel was converted in 1977, and his family followed him. He broke with the chain that controlled the music store that he managed and started his own company, Nantel Musique. Today Nantel is chairman of the Quebec Conference, which joined the Canadian Conference officially in 1984. Ste. Rose Church has had a succession of pastors, but since 1981 Charles and Julie Martin are giving leadership to this group, which in 1982 had fifty-two members.²³

Henry Brucks and Quebec

The young church in Quebec has not been spared from the vexations caused by differing views of a situation. The two issues that erupted in 1979 were the place of the Bible school in the scheme of things, and paternalism, the dependent position in which the Quebec leadership found itself. Until then the central person in both had been Ernest Dyck, who had directed the work almost unhindered, and in a somewhat authoritarian manner, as already inferred, until the issue of the Bible school arose. Though he preferred the "small school" concept, which he had long since inaugurated and which could be mobile and flexible, he nevertheless consented to take the principalship of an institution based on the "big school" concept with which he did not agree.

From the time he had become evangelism secretary with a special mandate for Quebec, Brucks had brought with him another approach, particularly with respect to leadership and its training. He realized that the ex-Zairian missionary Anglophone leadership of the 1960s had had "some pluses, some minuses" and, like Henry Venn in the nineteenth century, he realized that leadership native to the province should take over. That was the missiological principle (see page 24). How to train these leaders was the big question. Brucks wondered what the attitude of that leadership would be in the long run, if they were kept dependent too long. And what would be the relationship to the West that had supported Quebec with funds so long?²⁴

It is most intriguing to speculate that the differences we saw in the late thirties between South Abbotsforders and Yarrowers surfaced in Quebec forty years later. Brucks, the Yarrower, where the Winkler influence had been strong, wanted a full-fledged Bible school, complete with an ordered curriculum, a dormitory to create housing, and a community of Bible scholars. Dyck, on the other hand, wanted a less expensive, less top-heavy institution that would be more flexible and adaptable. Leaders should emerge from the church and not from a Bible school, an artificial creation by comparison. The institutionalization of Bible training was, in Dyck's view, premature for Quebec. What was being done was to impose a big school on a small conference.

Nevertheless, he accepted the leadership and was given two colleagues, Ben Klassen and Herb Wiens. Klassen, from



David Franco, Danny Wolfe, E. Dyck, H. Wiens, H. Brucks.

Morden originally, trained first as a teacher, then served as a missionary in Zaire both before and after the upheavals of 1960-64. Following a brief stay as pastor in Meadow Lake, he was appointed to *IBL* in 1977. Wiens, from Glenbush, had an M.A. in music and had taught at Winkler. This was the faculty of 1979. Martha Wall who came to Quebec in 1962, served as bilingual secretary and librarian.²⁵



Martha Wall, Librarian & Bookkeeper

In that year, in the midst of increasing tension over the philosophy that should govern the school, the other issue of paternalism/dependence surfaced in a vexing form. That this should have developed in the young Quebec church should come as no surprise. The many very young converts required and responded to a "strong authority figure," but they would not tolerate dominance from the outside very long. The nationalism that had swept over Quebec could not help but give them a self-identity and confidence. They quickly matured from their contacts with other Mennonite Brethren in the schools of the West, and Pierre Wingender particularly, about 1976, wished to see a more autonomous model adopted than the one pre-figured in the work and career of Dyck, as highly as he may have regarded him.

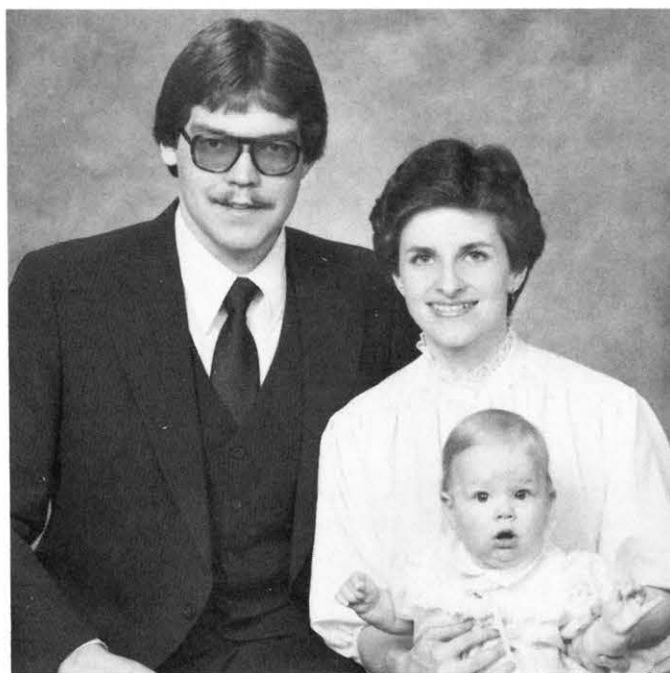
When Henry Brucks offered Dyck a sabbatical, not to shunt him aside but to inaugurate a new policy of sabbaticals for those from the West and to give him "space" for a short time, Dyck refused. Not only did he refuse, he insisted on May 27, 1980, a week after the Quebec referendum, in view of Quebec's unilingual policy, that French should become the official language of *IBL*. In his view, too many courses were relying too heavily on English. Over this issue Herb Wiens resigned and other matters brought Dyck to resign also. Ben Klassen, assisted by Gerald Janzen from British

Columbia and Jean Théoret, carried forward the policy of 1976. A symposium held in 1982 under the leadership of Ken Dyck looked at all sides of the question and gave *IBL* a strong mandate to carry on, now under the presidency of Théoret, one of the Francophones from Ste. Thérèse.²⁶

In this crisis the young Quebecers were somewhat torn between the two viewpoints. After all, Dyck had been their leader for so long and the one under whom they had matured and received their first opportunities for service. Nevertheless, they could also see the other viewpoint. They needed the school to train leaders for the immediate future. As we know now, the matter was dealt with redemptively, even if not entirely without hurt. Meanwhile, the young leadership has taken over the pastoral positions in the new congregations and are ably coping with that situation. Ernest Dyck, who served the Orchard Park church in Ontario for several years, has gone back and has again provided leadership in the integration of the Quebec association into the Canadian Conference.²⁷

Waterloo

The beginnings of the work here parallel earlier associations with the CSSM. This Mission began a Sunday school in the area of Waterloo/Knowlton, one hundred kilometers south of Montreal, about 1972. During the summer of 1974, Sig Polle brought some CBI students to do DVBS. When they "explained Mennonite Brethren and Anabaptist distinctives," James Carter of the CSSM offered the work to the Mennonite Brethren Conference. A group of about twenty calling themselves Victory Fellowship, stated at a meeting on June 15, 1975 that they would be interested in forming a church under the Mennonite Brethren even if they were not part of the Quebec association. When some of those were baptized, George and Ruth Wiens from Linden, Alberta, were called to serve the group. They arrived in September 1975 and stayed



**Waterloo, Quebec (1979).
Rod and Julia Zook, pastoral couple, and their daughter.**



Fullterm students with Herb Wiens, instructor.
Back: Serge Dion, Herb Wiens, Réal Beaudoir, Auguste Masson, Richard Toupin.

Front: Philip Fauvel, Sylvie Théoret, Renée Théoret, Sylvain Louzor.

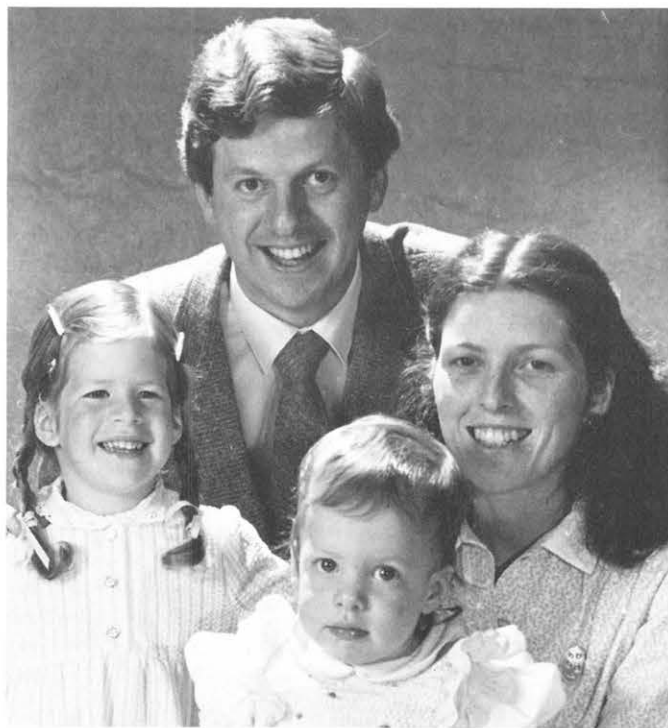
two years, long enough to bring the church into the Conference.

They were replaced by David and Ruth Taylor, who served part time. Nevertheless, the group grew as seven more were baptized. In 1979 Rod and Julia Zook from Minot, North Dakota took pastoral responsibility. Zook had attended WBI, Goshen, MBBC, and the University of Winnipeg.

One of the ongoing problems of this group was to find a suitable meeting place. From an elementary school in Waterloo, they went to the recording studios of Gospel Recordings in Knowlton. Eventually, in September 1981, the church decided to meet in two places — Waterloo and Cowansville. The motivating factor for this is the desire to form two congregations. Meanwhile, some of the Anglophones have left, and the Zooks resigned in 1983.²⁸

The Vision for the Eighties

The last church to be founded in the seventies was that of St. Donat, north of Ste. Agathe in the Laurentians. Franco, as mentioned, was the church planter, beginning in the fall of 1976. Soon he had a weekly attendance of twenty to thirty people in this ski resort town. Jean-Victor and Annie Brosseau, both graduates of *IBL*, began their ministry here in April 1979. At first their members were registered with the St. Jerome church, but then in November, 1980, the church was organized with twenty members. Two years later, Brosseau had the opportunity to purchase a vacant



St. Donat, Quebec (1980s).
Jean-Victor and Annie Brosseau, pastoral couple, and their children.

restaurant, which was then renovated for use as a church. When the author and his wife had the privilege of visiting the Brosseaus together with Henry and Helen Derksen in 1982, we shared our faith and interests with Henry as interpreter.

Without the interpreter beside us, and with Jean-Victor bravely venturing into English, I asked whether Jean-Victor knew that the French and the English languages had four thousand words in common. "Yes? Why, then I know English!" he laughingly responded. I said, "Then I also know French." Though I had very little difficulty following French when Derksen spoke it, it was different with the quick-speaking Brosseau.

Since the founding of St. Donat, the Quebec Association has arrested the attention of the Canadian Conference with its ambitious program to have forty churches by the end of the eighties. Since 1980, churches have been started at Grand-Riviere and New Richmond in the Gaspé, served by Denis Tremblay; in Charlesbourg, Quebec City, by David Franco; Ste. Anne-des-Plaines by Richard Toupin; and Plateau Mont-Royal by Guy Demers.²⁹

The Sixth Provincial Conference

A Quebec association or fellowship was first organized in 1972, with René Hainaut as the first chairman. Serious discussion of an affiliation with the Mennonite Brethren Conference came during Henry Brucks's period as evangelism secretary. The official proposal was presented to the Quebec association on October 28, 1983 in St. Eustache and then sent to all churches for discussion and ratification. All churches gave their enthusiastic support and, in July 1984 the association of six hundred members became the sixth provincial jurisdiction in the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren churches.³⁰



Quebec Association Meeting, Oct./83 at St. Eustache.
Some of those attending included August Masson, Denis Tremblay, Gerald Janzen, Robert Dagenais, Victor Adrian.

The fact that this was done with enthusiasm in 1984 is not to be attributed only to the circumstance that Brucks's view prevailed between 1976 and 1979 respecting *IBL*. The Quebec leadership can see that Dyck's leadership from 1961 to 1976 was indispensable in many ways. After all, he was the leader when the revival came, and when Quebecers first received help from the West. Théoret told the author in 1982, "The French did not accept the M.B.s because they



Lydia & Ernest Dyck, 1983.
Pastoral Couple, St. Jerome.

were M.B.s but, they accepted M.B. workers because they were the leaders when his friends and he were converted. The M.B.s were providing the only witness of its kind in Ste. Thérèse then."

Only after conversion did Théoret come to a growing appreciation of Mennonite Brethren and Anabaptist distinctives. Through Shannon's ministry in 1962 when Théoret was very impressionable, through the work of Dyck and Derksen, and through MBBC's history classes with Abe Dueck and studying theology under Elmer Martens at MBBS, Théoret came to the current fellow-feeling with the Mennonite Brethren. He and others are grateful that the Mennonite Brethren from the West did not "push" their distinctives. Gerald Janzen confirmed this in his interview with the *Mennonite Brethren Herald* in 1984. While there are those who don't care for labels, others, he stated,

identify very strongly with the M.B. Conference. As time has passed some have come to the consciousness, it is the M.B. church that brought me the gospel, that started the Bible school, that supplied funds for evangelism, church planting, and encourages us in our faith and receives us with open arms when we go to conferences.³¹

B. The Atlantic Provinces

Lack of Migration

Mennonites have never settled in the Atlantic Provinces in large numbers. The Maritimes have never promised the opportunities for unlimited cheap and productive land to the same extent as Manitoba, in its history. Nor did they provide the comforting thought of Mennonite settlements already in existence.

Where the Maritimes missed out on Mennonites entirely, it appears, is during the coming of the pre-Loyalists, that is, after 1755 and before 1783. Whereas Albert County in New Brunswick was settled by Americans of German origin, it

does not appear that any Mennonites were among them. Had there been any significant number, the story of Mennonite migrations in Canada might have been quite different.¹

That was the story of migrations with respect to Mennonites before World War Two. Then in the mid fifties, Siegfried and Margaret Janzen moved to Nova Scotia and settled near Canning and Kentville, in the apple growing Annapolis Valley. While they early joined the United Baptist church, they have always been known as Mennonites.



Maritimes — 1971.

A meeting of M.B. and former M.B. in Sackville, New Brunswick, with F. C. Peters.

Agnes & John Esau, F. C. Peters, Eleanor and Paul Rogalsky, Justina & Peter Penner, Gertrude and John Froese (formerly Kincolith, B.C.), Margaret & Siegfried Janzen, and Bill Peters between them.

Even more significant for outreach to the East have been the lives of John and Agnes (Sudermann) Esau. They became the first coordinators of Christian Service (CS) in the East. John came from East Chilliwack, and Agnes from Port Rowan. Both attended Bible school, John in Coaldale and Yarrow, and Agnes in Winkler. They met at MBBC, married, and served as missionaries in the Congo from the mid fifties to 1960. It has been said of them that "the sense of mission which they brought with them to Truro and Debert [in 1962] was a legacy of the devout families from which they came." They were evangelical and evangelistic in their outlook, just the kind to take the initiative in laying a foundation, though partly unwittingly, for Mennonite Brethren expansion to the Maritimes. In 1965 they appealed to Hillsboro to send qualified young people to fill vacancies as teachers and nurses. As a result, John was able to use his position at the Nova Scotia Teachers' College in Truro, to coordinate placement of the first Christian Service units.²

Christian Service

Christian Service was introduced at the General Conference Mennonite/Brethren level and launched in 1960. It was at first directed by Vernon Wiebe and Dwight Wiebe. The program, which became popular immediately, was merged with the Board of Foreign Mission to become Mennonite Brethren Missions and Services (MBM/S) in 1966, sometimes called BOMAS. In this program, Mennonite Brethren youth found the outlet that, as it turned out, was largely taken away when church growth and planting, and camping, became more professional than was the earlier program of

DVBS. Rudy Wiebe asked in 1962, "What is to be done with those who are not the thickest cream of the crop? They are always in the majority." He argued that many would give several years of "service on expenses" if given the opportunity. Some of those who got involved might just discover in themselves something capable of development for a higher service seemingly reserved for the few.

The year 1968-69 saw twelve couples and eight single people in Nova Scotia. While most of those who came stayed only two years, some stayed from four to six years and some stayed to settle in Nova Scotia. Harold and Erna Redekopp from Winnipeg stayed two years. Lawrent Buschman, a son of Congo missionaries, and his wife Rose, taught in Bridgewater for a number of years. Norman Wiens came as a single, married, and stayed, and eventually became moderator of the church that was formed in Dartmouth.³



Dartmouth, Nova Scotia (February 1967).

A Christian Service group, including John Esau, Sophie Quiring, Lawrent and Rose Buschman, Rudy Dyck.

It is safe to say that the combined witness of the Christian Service units in Nova Scotia (and their counterparts in Newfoundland, MCC Voluntary Service, together with the organization called MAP (Mennonites in the Atlantic Provinces) has made a profound impact. Though Christian Service by itself has not planted churches, yet the influence has been spread out, with wholesome results. Mennonites are much better known and understood today than in 1965, partly because of scattered families such as the Janzens, Esaus, and Dan and Nan Doerksen in Fredericton, but also because Christian Service units changed the Mennonite image from the media one of "beards, bonnets, and buggies" to one suggesting service, not to mention simplicity, wholesomeness, reliability, and professional competence. Having even more impact however, has been the growing knowledge about Mennonites through the media generally because of the works of MCC, Mennonite Disaster Service, and through the widespread use of Doris Longacre's book *More With Less*.⁴

As the Christian Service units tended to cluster in the twin cities of Halifax and Dartmouth, the administration of

CIM and Christian Service consulted together on the question of expansion into the Maritimes. The early coordinators were Harvey Gossen of St. Catharines and Dwight Wiebe of Hillsboro. Church planting and Christian Service was coordinated, and the Maritimes was designated "a mission field." As a result, the first full-time workers, Walter and Selma Epp from British Columbia, were placed in Dartmouth in 1967. Walter was expected to devote half-time to the chaplaincy of the Christian Service units, and half-time as church planter in Dartmouth, whose potential for growth had been surveyed with the help of John Esau.⁵

Dartmouth

The reason the Dartmouth Mennonite Brethren Church has made a lesser impact than the one indicated above is twofold. One, it has had its ups and downs, and two, it has tried to be just one among many evangelical-fundamentalist churches rather than aiming to be an Anabaptist-Mennonite church in the twentieth century. The latter kind of witness would have reinforced the impact of the wider movement and would have drawn the appreciation of the religious and intellectual community of the Maritimes. As it was, the Dartmouth witness tended to contradict what was perceived elsewhere.

As stated, Dartmouth began under the leadership of Walter G. Epp from Strawberry Hill (Kennedy Heights), and before that from East Chilliwack. Epp had attended MBBC for one year and had assisted in the Queensborough chapel for a short time. He was a teacher by profession. When the opportunity to serve in ministry arose in 1967 he was quickly ordained and sent to Dartmouth. When he arrived in Dartmouth, he began with services in a school and tried to integrate the Christian Service units into the church planting effort. Unfortunately, this chaplaincy proved difficult for him, and he resigned from that position. Almost from the outset it was clear that the "dual administration" with which he was charged was "impractical." John Schmidt as chairman of the Board promised in 1969 to alter the situation

in order to set Epp free to be a church planter. As it was, he actually returned to fulltime teaching in Dartmouth, a position for which he was qualified.⁶

Walter and Selma Epp were succeeded in 1971 by Isaac and Shirley Bergen of Hepburn. Bergen was well-trained for the task in Dartmouth, having completed MBBC's B.D. course and having university training as well. Unfortunately he stayed only three years, and that was not long enough, certainly not for the Maritimes. Bergen, however, brought the dozen members of the Dartmouth group into the Conference in 1973. Among these were John and Agnes Esau who lived at Debert, about one hundred kilometers away, Rudy and Ruby Hamm, home in Canada from service in Zaire, Laurie and Marie Taylor, Norman Wiens, and the Bergen family. Following a short interim under Harold Schroeder's leadership, Hartley Smith became pastor.⁷



Dartmouth, Nova Scotia (1975).
The church group with Hartley and Mareta Smith, pastoral couple.

Smith was raised in Elgin, New Brunswick, and attended the fundamentalist New Brunswick Bible Institute — non-denominational and anti-charismatic — located at Victoria, New Brunswick. He found his first charge in Dartmouth, where he preached in the Northbrooke Bible Chapel, next door to Walter Epp's Mount Edward Bible Fellowship. From there he was recommended to the Mountain View church near Mission, British Columbia. Following a few successful years with the Canadian Home Bible League in a "motel ministry," he was recommended to the Board as a pastor suitable for the Dartmouth Mennonite Brethren Church. During his tenure (1975-80) the church actually took that name and also managed to purchase an Adventist church, which was dedicated on May 2, 1976 with F. C. Peters as the featured speaker. As there seemed to be a burgeoning of the church, it was disheartening to see this church later "flounder," as reported in the press.⁸

Smith's last pastoral report to the church and an interview he gave the author tells part of the story. The quantum leap into the Mennonite world was "greater than anticipated." But when he followed Herb Neufeld in British Columbia, that church had already moved in a charismatic direction. Certainly it was much farther advanced than Hartley was personally, coming as he did from NBBI. He came to realize, as he stated, that many Mennonite Brethren were "fighting God." There was a tension between freedom in worship



Dartmouth, Nova Scotia (February 1973).
Charter Group of Mount Edward Bible Fellowship.
Top: Norman Wiens, Rudy Hamm, ———, Joan, Harold Schmidt, John Esau.
Middle: Laurie Taylor, Ike Bergen, pastor, Ruby Hamm, Agnes Esau, Nick Dyck, Board of Evangelism.
Bottom: Marie Taylor, Shirley Bergen, Marilyn Froese Hudson.

under the Spirit's movement, and resistance to such freedom.

Encouraged to seek the "fullness" of the Spirit, Smith did so and had his "wave on wave of 'shock treatment'" while living at Mission. He claims he did not try to make his experience normative for the church because 70 percent did not want it. But Smith did bring his cherished charisma with him to Dartmouth. About 1979 there was a separation over this and some left. Norman Wiens stated at the conference that whereas the church had once been filled to capacity and had forty-eight members, many people "started to leave, many because of discontent and dissatisfaction with the leadership."

In any case, despite what looked like an upturn in the winter of 1979-80, Smith was asked by the Evangelism secretary to step down, and Henry M. Willems from Hepburn went to Dartmouth to bring some stability to the group. Smith admitted he had made some "serious mistakes" in Dartmouth. He had observed again this tug of war between freedom and restraint. When about ten families — essentially Pentecostals — came, he claims he resisted them and catered to the others, and that was one mistake! In either case, there would have been a split.⁹

The upshot of all this is that between 1967 and 1980 Dartmouth had two leaders for whom the church was confessedly a "learning experience." The Maritimes have



Dartmouth, Nova Scotia (1981).
George, Andrew, Ruth, and Lois Wiens. George has served at Waterloo, Quebec, and Dartmouth.

deserved better. George and Ruth Wiens came from Linden, Alberta, in 1981 and stayed until 1984. George is also essentially a teacher but talented in music, as is his whole family, and they contributed what they could to the church in a difficult time. One wonders nevertheless whether the supervising leadership since 1967 has understood what the Maritimes are and require, if church planting is to succeed here. Quebec, it seems to the author, has a much better chance than the Maritimes of planting Anabaptist-Mennonite churches for the long term because indigenous leadership will do it, whereas in the Maritimes outside implantations are not welcome unless they are seen to fit. Certainly if the Anabaptist-Mennonite movement is to mean anything in this traditional and oldest area of the country, Mennonite Brethren will have to come to terms with the healthy mix of Mennonites now current in the Maritimes.¹⁰

Mennonites in the Atlantic Province

There is no mystery about the origins of Mennonites in the Atlantic Provinces (MAP). When the author first moved to New Brunswick in 1965, he occasionally met people from "Eastern Canada" (Ontario, as seen from the West! or "Upper Canada" as seen from the true East), who would tell him about the Mennonites who had moved to the east "to get away from it all." There may be a few of those but most Mennonites have come for a purpose or a mission. The author in 1974 attempted to find out what brought Mennonites here by surveying Mennonite professionals working in the Maritimes. Once he had published the results in the *Mennonite Reporter*, those professionals requested a meeting for the sake of getting acquainted and having fellowship. That was in 1975.



1982 Standing Committee of MAP.
Elliot, Garbers, Brubachers, Wienses, Friesens, Penners.
At Mount Allison University Chapel.

In this way, MAP started and continued with an annual retreat for the sake of fellowship and edification, and tried to integrate new groups as they came. In the third year, the invitation was broadened to include all known Mennonites in the Maritimes and Newfoundland. Five of the ten annual meetings have been held at Mount Allison University, in Sackville, New Brunswick, as this is the geographical center of the Maritimes. Though there is a standing committee with a revolving membership, the committee functions only to plan the annual retreat and to serve when requested as a resource for the MCC director for the Maritimes appointed several years ago.

One of the strong features of MAP is its Anabaptist-Mennonite orientation. This has permitted a broad base of fellowship with Mennonites of all backgrounds, no matter where the individual families may belong in terms of affiliation. It has also made it possible to have a variety of resource persons such as John Howard Yoder, Dan Zehr, Larry Kehler, Hubert Schwartzentruber, and Frank C. Peters.

MAP has gone on record as stating that church planting in the Maritimes should be done in consultation with other Mennonite denominations, especially the Mennonite Church. Schwartzentruber and James Nikkel met in Sackville in 1982, and David Dyck of MCC, Canada, has undertaken correspondence on the subject. The fellowship that has been

knit here is remarkable. For example, when in 1981 John and Sophie Quiring Esau (his second wife, and a former Christian Service worker) returned to Zaire for a term of service, MAP "commissioned" them as their missionaries. It was an unforgettable experience.¹¹

The Mennonite mix mentioned earlier — besides the Mennonite Brethren group in Dartmouth — includes the Mennonite Fellowship at Petitcodiac/Havelock/Sussex, a small congregation belonging to the Western Ontario Mennonite Conference. This congregation has already made its mark by its wholehearted participation in MAP, and its MCC-related ministry to a home called OPAL for handicapped adults.

Since the beginning of May 1983, members of the *Kleingemeinde*, known in Manitoba as the Evangelical Mennonite Conference, have been returning to Canada and Nova Scotia after living first in Mexico and Belize since 1952. They settled first at Great Village, then removed to Upper Kennetcook, Nova Scotia, where nineteen families purchased acreages in the Northfield Settlement. Then, encouraged by James Nikkel, a second Mennonite Brethren group has started in the Maritimes. Robert and Janice Buhr who also served in Zaire began bilingual services in their home at Tide Head, near Campbellton, New Brunswick, and chartered the Restigouche Valley Church on December 3, 1984.

This development is part of the long-term goal of the Mennonite Brethren to have an Atlantic Mennonite Brethren Conference, making the seventh in Canada which would stretch the church literally "from sea to shining sea." Presumably a church planter will try to form a cluster of churches in the growth area of Halifax-Dartmouth, another in the Acadian area of northeast New Brunswick, and perhaps another in the Saint John/Fredericton area. *IBL* will be called on to supply pastors for churches in Acadian areas. To sum up, the Maritimes now have four evangelical groups: two evangelistic Mennonite Brethren fellowships; one service-oriented Mennonite Fellowship; and a group of conservative Mennonites transplanted from Manitoba and Belize. MAP's main role at present is to bring them all into periodic fellowship.¹²

Newfoundland

Planting a seventh conference in the Maritimes will still leave the Mennonite Brethren far from Signal Hill in St. John's Newfoundland, and Labrador. There were some Mennonite Brethren among the vanguard of MCC Voluntary Service in Newfoundland, beginning in 1954. That activity peaked in the 1960s, and not many of the teachers and nurses stayed in Newfoundland. The outreach was first arranged by Harvey Taves with the support of Max Dawe, the superintendent of the United Church's mission in Newfoundland. Robert Kreider, in 1961, began to think of MCC Voluntary Service in Newfoundland as the model for Teachers Abroad Program (TAP) in Africa, and as "a link in the modernization process in underdeveloped countries." The correlative program of Mennonite Brethren Christian Service, which similarly brought teachers and nurses to Nova Scotia, was a mark of the 1960s and 1970s. In the 1970s there were fewer and fewer vacancies for personnel not from within these provinces.¹³

As Leslie Stobbe wrote on September 14, 1956, the



MCC/VS Newfoundland, 1964.

Arranger of First Units: Harvey Taves, MCC Ontario. "In the Name of Christ."



MCC/VS Unit, Newfoundland (August 1960).

Men: Myron Harms, Walter Dueck, Samuel Wenger, Eldred Thierstein, Allen Gingrich.

Women: Mamie Schrock, Mary Ellen Kauffman, Mildred Bender, Marion Sherk, Mrs. Walter Dueck, Betty Damude, Rosella Hostetler, Mrs. Eldred T., Mrs. Allen G., Agnes Dueck.

influence of one teacher's consistent Christian life over a period of time can be of incalculable benefit. We know from the testimonies of many Newfoundlanders how much the patience, dedication, and friendship meant in the outports. One testimony will have to suffice. Don Rideout wrote the author in 1976:

I shall always be grateful for the Mennonite work in Newfoundland. I believe that the first Mennonites came to Baie Verte, Nfld. when I started Grade 10 in 1955. Bill [Miller] taught me in grades 10 and 11 and I'm absolutely convinced that if he hadn't come at that critical time in my development that I might not even have come to university, let alone get a Ph.D. . . . The Schools had only three rooms and Bill taught grades 8,9,10,11. There were three students in grade 10 when I went and 3 of us in grade 11 in the

following year. Bill worked extremely hard and because of that he forced us to work, not by threats but by his example. (I won an \$800 scholarship in grade 11 thanks to Bill Miller).

Rideout earned his Ph.D. at McGill in 1970, and has been teaching Mathematics at Memorial University of Newfoundland. Since his conversion in 1957-58 he has been active in Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship at the university level.¹⁴

The author wrote about MCC Voluntary Service internship as follows:

While going to Newfoundland may have been adventuresome for some VSers [or CSers in NS], for most it has been what Orie Miller in 1959 called "internship in Christian service," from which Mennonite young people have gained more than they have contributed. For the experience helped them, as one perceptive correspondent explained, to work through their adjustment to new cultural norms following a relatively restrictive lifestyle in their families and home congregations.

The author also drew a comparison between the two voluntary programs that have relevance here:

Whereas the two voluntary service programs resemble each other remarkably in terms of job description and goals, the MB/CS adds the dimension of church planting which suggests an ideal of self-perpetuation.

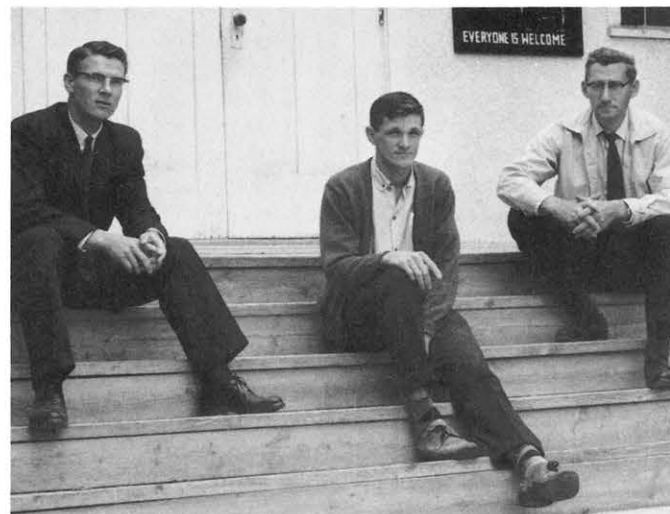
This, apparently, MCC has never entertained very seriously. Moreover, this was specifically denied MCC as a goal in Newfoundland by the co-sponsoring UCC. . . .¹⁵

There was a revival of interest in Newfoundland in 1979. Evan and Linda Epp Heise of the Brethren in Christ were appointed to head up MCC Voluntary Service work in the Atlantic Provinces. They were domiciled in St. John's where they supervised a home for disturbed young people and placed teachers and nurses wherever it was possible, but mainly in Labrador. When they left for an MCC assignment in India, their charge was divided in two. Brian Elliot of the Mennonite Fellowship, Petitcodiac/Havelock/Sussex, was appointed to supervise personnel and projects in the Maritimes, and Campbell Nesbit was placed in Newfoundland/Labrador.

MCC Canada figures for 1983 indicated that three persons were placed in New Brunswick to assist with OPAL, the home for handicapped adults started by the Mennonite Fellowship, two in Nova Scotia, namely the Mennonite Brethren couple John and Judy Dyck of Kitchener who were serving with IVCF, and ten in Newfoundland/Labrador. For some time, around 1980, a sizeable group met every Sunday evening in St. John's for worship and fellowship. Peter E. and Erna Penner and the Dennis Helmuths were among the leaders. In the fall of 1983, except for the Labrador work, only the Gary Penners and several Voluntary Service workers remained in St. John's, also a few families scattered around the province.¹⁶

C. Manitoba

We have had occasion to remark on the stronger administrative rigor that characterized Manitoba's home mission leadership from about 1955. Victor Adrian's 1964



Winnipegosis, Man. (c. 1966).

"Conversations at Winnipegosis", John Block, Don Wiebe, Victor Adrian.

report still reflected this and also initiated some rethinking, though that report was bypassed rather rapidly. He began by asking "Where are we going in home missions?" He had sensed a lack of direction and enthusiasm, if not apathy about work at home. Obviously, the work of the past had to be reconsidered because of rapid urbanization. It was clear that some new ministries unattached to a local group such as chaplains would have to be supported in the city. His emphasis on comparison, results, and publicity put pressure on the old fields, as we have seen. Adrian's aim to give home missions greater publicity had the desired effect. Harold Jantz of the *Mennonite Brethren Herald* was only too glad to cooperate in bringing forward the subject by reporting on field trips with Adrian. This generated a healthy discussion of priorities in home missions and suggested that "frontier" thinking in the Bible institutes would help Conferences to respond to the new challenge.¹

Priorities

Perhaps in part stimulated by the Decade of Enlargement programs, a search for a new strategy was undertaken in conjunction with the annual ministers' course at MBBC. A panel representing MBBC, CIM, MCC, and home missionaries from Manitoba and Saskatchewan sat down on February 16, 1966 to discuss "outreach strategy." Students were present and made some trenchant observations. The media report suggested that the panel had "revealed how little Mennonite Brethren have concerned themselves about anything that hasn't lain on their immediate doorstep. . . .;" how little overall strategy planning had been undertaken in the past; and that the "study commission" was perhaps the best instrument to grapple with suggestions that involved considerable ambiguity.²



Manitoba Home Mission Board and Workers (c. 1965).
Seated: Henry Willms, F. C. Peters, Henry Regier, Abe Quiring, and John Quiring.
Standing: Victor Adrian, Jake Suderman, John Unger, Rudy Willms, Joe Wiebe, J. J. Neufeld, David Duerksen, H. R. Baerg.

Manitoba brethren took some of these ideas as they groped for a set of priorities that would eventually require a new division of labor as well as a change in the philosophy regarding mission churches. In 1968 the Manitoba Conference asked A. J. Froese, D. E. Redekop, and Leonard Siemens to speak to the issue of "Priorities in our Conference Work." Their priorities were quite diverse. Froese focused on the relationship of the Bible schools to home missions. Redekop, much more critical, stated bluntly that we had been "singularly unsuccessful in outreach in our brotherhood" and had always required "outside inspiration and training." His eleven priorities posed a challenge to total mobilization for witness and service, through "service training and discipleship." It would be necessary to restructure congregational programs. This seemed an echo of the challenge to enlargement brought forward by the American brethren. Siemens was most sharp with the Conference, criticizing it particularly for its failure to develop an adequate service to university students, as noted elsewhere.

One concrete suggestion to come out of this discussion about priorities was serious consideration of the need for a full-time person in the field of church planting. Unless this was done, it was believed that the old committee structure would never raise home missions above the status quo. The CRC then continued this discussion of priorities, and in 1969 Jake Falk reported only to demur about the radical positions taken a year earlier by Redekop and Siemens. No attempt should be made to "cut back" or alter existing programs and structures. But the CRC did agree with Siemens that university students should have priority. But beyond that, like Canadian governments, the CRC called for another study commission to look at four institutions: MBCI, WBI, Radio, and Home Missions "in order to determine their effectiveness and usefulness in the light of the expenses involved and make appropriate recommendations." (Ontario ten years later asked the same questions, but brethren wanted answers from the Bible as well as the pocket book.) Twelve representative brethren were elected to form an "independent commission."³

In 1970 this commission rode roughshod over the statement of 1964, which had been thought definitive. It was quite clear that the post-mission church era had arrived. Upon discovering that all that was left from the past was a jail

chaplaincy and DVBS, the commission concluded, "The evaluation . . . of the past is of limited value, in that it has in a sense come to an end. Methods in outreach have been changing very rapidly and an entirely new thrust is in the offing."

As a result of the recommendations of this commission, Manitoba took a decided turn. While affirming evangelism again to the exclusion of other biblical mandates, it was decided that three commissions would govern outreach: Inner City; Suburban Expansion; and Northern Venture. This example was followed in Saskatchewan and Alberta in due course.⁴

The Pas as Model

In spite of all this discussion, the new models for mission in Manitoba were created in another way. James and Elfrieda Nikkel took the lead in applying the new concepts in the North during their residence in The Pas (1969-77). They introduced Christian Day Camps as a successor to DVBS. Placing what were called Lay Mission Associates meant self-supporting colonization evangelism. Whenever a core group of believers was formed, they were called Neighborhood Life groups "because of their emphasis on sharing New Life in small neighborhood settings."

The next stage was the formation of a church, under the new system of financial support, whose main thrust would be to gain new members in the community. The application of these policies and principles set the pace and laid down the methods of church planting for the North. While not all was smooth sailing for the first field director under the new division of labor, the Northern Venture seemed largely successful. The whole was marked by an aggressive though risky development: mushrooming churches in one-company towns, beset by mobile memberships but nevertheless pointing the road to success.

In his 1976 report, Nikkel gave a more balanced account, allowing that there were some "special liabilities" involved, but that many of these could be overcome by the removal to the North of "stable couples" as lay associates to help "build maturity into the churches." As though anticipating his return to the south to plant churches, he outlined expansion plans for greater Winnipeg as well as for small towns.

Fresh from the conquest of the North, having demonstrated personally what could be done, Nikkel returned in 1977 to take up the new Manitoba Conference leadership position as executive secretary to be housed in the Christian Resource Center on Notre Dame Avenue. His comparative analysis in 1979 of the achievements of the sixties and the seventies showed there was no end to what could be achieved. The programs were challenging and demanding, but the Conference seemed prepared to meet that challenge and the corresponding budget.⁵

New Ministries

In the development of an Inner City mission in Winnipeg, no attempt was made to develop a rescue mission as in Vancouver and Calgary. Rather, Manitoba leaders concentrated on an offenders' ministry and eventually created a downtown inner city resource where counseling took place under unified direction from John Quiring. Also, at 700 Notre Dame, in the heart of the old city, Linda Banman, returned missionary

from Brazil, worked with the Portuguese. This was similar to CIM's earlier policy of "*besondere Volksgruppen*," but with a difference.

Following his ministry at Portage la Prairie, John Quiring was appointed chaplain to Headingley Jail and served other penal institutions. In due course, as government agencies became concerned enough to implement correctional programs, Quiring was able to turn away from giving assistance to those who needed the help given by halfway houses to ministering "primarily to the spiritual needs of the inmates." This was done with increasing recognition from the many agencies, both governmental and evangelical, involved with offenders. His success at rehabilitation of offenders because of personal involvement with them was considerable. John Quiring's leadership in the new ministry was made more popular to be sure by the media attention given to Prison Fellowship International founded by Charles Colson.⁶

Salem

Though the Manitoba brethren drew a threefold division of labor in 1970, it will be more helpful to use the twofold division agreed upon later. Church planting really concerned only two areas, metropolitan Winnipeg, and everywhere else outside the big metropole, including Northern Venture. Church planting in Winnipeg has produced an interesting variety of congregations. Logan Avenue, of course, came first, having grown so much more painfully, it seems, from the earlier old-style mission outreach.

In a former chapter we left the story at about 1960. Under Rudy and Louise Willms the work was often discouraging, yet progress was made. In 1963 they brought Logan Avenue into the Conference and in 1965 moved the church to Alexander and Chambers where the congregation had purchased an old church and renamed it Salem. Jake Balzer's ministry at Salem was characterized by an intensive effort to know the people of the "geographical community," which was very much inner city, if not city center.

Would the church have a breakthrough? This would be the question facing Arno Fast who came in 1969. Would the application of the full range of programs envisioned by the Inner City commission and directed from Notre Dame Avenue integrate Salem, or bypass it? In addition to "city visitation" by the retired Joe Wiebe, there were clubs, camping outings, community meetings, and cooperation with the Living Bible Explorers (LBE). But did these benefit Salem? By 1972, Salem seems to have been disregarded within the total inner city report by Erwin Penner.

Three years later, the Conference report stated that "one of the most significant steps of the future may involve a movement of some who are called back to a part of the city from which some of us originally came."¹² The writer was referring to the North End, but there was no indication that Salem was the church that would benefit from the new activity generated under the commission. Salem seems to have been unrelated simply because it was independent and did not fit. Or was Salem in fact "second-rated"? Transfer Mennonite Brethren were not going to Salem, yet Salem was expected to do neighborhood evangelism.

Salem struggles along with sixty members, many of whom commute, as is the case in Brooklands. Salem did, however, become the center of a new activity in 1974 when,



Salem, Winnipeg (early 1970s).

Arno Fast receives new members by baptism and transfer:
Front: Henry and Hildegard Ziehm, Helen Vidovi, Billy and Barbara Moore, Arno Fast.
Back: Dan and Virginia Thiessen, George and Marie Fast, the Peter Nikkels.

as will be indicated, Linda Banman undertook a work among the Portuguese speaking of the area and used the Salem church to build a separate congregation.⁷

Brooklands

Northwest, beyond Notre Dame, lies Brooklands, a blue collar area of greater Winnipeg. In 1957, concerned people from the South End church, among them D. E. Redekop, organized Sunday schools in several locations. Abe Quiring was called there from Carman, and stayed thirteen years. He organized a mission church in 1963 and found considerable encouragement in the work. His previous ministries at Horndean and Carman had probably been longer than the average, yet after four and a half years, he articulated one of the great problems in home missions, the lack of long-term commitment:



Brooklands church — groundbreaking, 1965.

Abe Quiring is on the left of half-circle, H. R. Baerg, Victor Adrian.

Having spent some four and one half years in the work at Brooklands, I am more convinced than before that workers should count on long term service in one field. It takes time to learn to know a community and to win the confidence of the people. As we spend time, more and more doors are opened to the gospel witness. . . .

The greatest need in Brooklands is for more members who are willing and able to carry the burden of the work in the Sunday school, youth work and choir. . . . At this point it is important that we get more members to share the burden.⁸

Did it happen? In a sense, yes. When he made the appeal he had forty-one members and when he left in 1976 there were seventy-six. Interviews with the two incumbents at Brooklands, however, revealed that phenomenal growth was highly unlikely. Only about six or seven families can be traced to DVBS and the early South End effort. Nearly all the economically and professionally upwardly mobile people in Brooklands have tended to move away, in spite of the fact that much money has been spent on urban renewal in the area. Also, it was evident that middle class Mennonites would never move there. The majority of those who serve in the church are commuters from all over Winnipeg. And some of those are perceived by others to have formed an in-group, who don't relate easily to those living in Brooklands who haven't yet "made it." Don Enns' final comment was, even though Brooklands is a self-supporting church, it is "a commuting church desperately trying to be a community church."¹⁵ All over Canada there are Mennonite Brethren who have learned that this does not work well — in Toronto, Edmonton, and various situations in British Columbia.⁹

Maples

Maples has decided to do it differently. Located on Jefferson, it is a new church that began without a Mennonite Brethren nucleus. In fact, the planter, Arthur Kliever, did not want to be dependent on one. He has held four pastoral charges under the Baptists. During a twenty year period, he was weaned away from Mennonite Brethren. Yet he was willing to return to them (as a graduate of Winkler) and, once the



Maples, Winnipeg (1983).
Elsie and Art Kliever.

research had proved that Maples was a growth area in need of a church, he went to work. He and his wife, Elsie, and children have found the re-entry quite easy because they have found the Mennonite Brethren church more open than it was twenty years ago. He has come to appreciate the stability factor in Mennonite Brethren history and heritage.

The name Baptist or Mennonite is not a barrier. Rather, in his view, it is *arrogance*. People leave the Mennonite Brethren church, Kliever believes, because the theological expression is too sophisticated and the ministry too educated, or it does not know how to relate to the untutored person in the pew. After all, people are biblically illiterate, and he has proceeded on that assumption. Kliever's work was also made much easier because there were no longer the same hangups about numbers that had to be present before organization could take place. Maples was chartered with thirteen members almost immediately, on March 29, 1980.¹⁰

French and Portuguese

St. Boniface, as the traditional French-speaking Catholic area of Winnipeg, has long posed a challenge to Manitoba brethren. About 1972, St. Boniface was surveyed for the purpose of establishing a work among the French-speaking people. Ernest Dyck was brought in from Quebec as a consultant. He urged an aggressive ministry in the French language that would call for radical separation from the Catholic church.

For a number of years no person could be found to lead such a ministry. It was, in fact, not until late 1981 that Dick and Gertrude Neufeld moved from Quebec to assume responsibility for *L'Eglise Chretienne Evangelique de St. Boniface*. Neufeld had retired from a career in the iron ore business. Converted late in life, he came to Winnipeg to help a small group in Maples. There he met Art Kliever who noted his facility in French. In this fortuitous way, St. Boniface received a French-speaking church planter.



Linda Banman, 1979.
Portugese church resource person, Salem.

At the same time, awaiting only the arrival of a concerned person on the scene, it became obvious that Winnipeg's ethnic mix contained many Portuguese speaking people. When Linda Banman, a Portuguese-speaking missionary home from Brazil, became available, she was engaged in 1974 to work full-time among this group, using, as noted, the Salem church.

After four years, David Franco was brought in from St. Jerome, which had begun with a segment of Portuguese in the membership. Franco's evangelistic meetings demonstrated uniquely that Quebec's resources could be put

to good use for the rest of the Conference. Once the mission was initiated, Bruno Wiebe was appointed to coordinate the ministry as a lay associate, while Banman concentrated on follow-up. This resembles a pattern established in British Columbia where church edifices such as Salem's are given over to ministry and church planting among ethnic groups.¹¹

Portage la Prairie

In a certain sense, the story of mission in this prairie city belongs to the earlier period, as the presuppositions upon which the work was established date from that period. On the other hand, it illustrates one of the recurring problems among Mennonite Brethren — how to integrate and form a church where there are two or more Mennonite branches represented. The *Mennonite Observer* first carried the story of those who began to meet for prayer in 1959 and then asked for assistance. John Quiring was the worker sent in response. The work seemed promising as attendance built up to between thirty and forty in the first year. A new chapel was built and dedicated in 1962. All was going well, attendance was on the increase, and Quiring appealed for people to move in to assist in the growing work. It was there that he began his prison ministry, and, as we have seen, turned to chaplaincy work as a result.

When Quiring left in 1965, John B. Epp, whom we have seen in Orillia, filled the vacancy, and Howard Loewen came as summer pastor in 1966. Epp had had serious reservations about going to Portage. He claims that his five-page statement of reservations about the viability of a church there was brushed aside. When Epp left rather abruptly after only two years, it was interesting to turn to an interview he gave Victor Adrian early in 1966. From this interview the reader learns that Epp knew that he should stay for some time in order "to earn the right to speak to persons about Christ," and he was challenged in the interview with the theory of intensive visitation. But he found himself in another of those situations where "the policies are unwritten and the situations quite unfamiliar." He therefore suggested that "we should have schools, not only for foreign missions, but for home missions as well."

While we must not read too much into a theoretical discussion, it is nevertheless intriguing to speculate why church planting was considered so hard here. Epp evidently had the expectation of working toward a Mennonite Brethren church, but how to do that when there were so few Mennonite Brethren seemed a problem.¹²

Minutes of the Westview Mennonite Brethren Church revealed a multifaceted problem. Within the group there were some who wanted to get on without a pastor. Yet when Epp resigned in 1967, Ed Giesbrecht was called. The group apparently liked him so well they were willing to help him with Bible College expenses. Still, the reluctance in stewardship and the confusion about direction and church affiliation remained.

The story might have ended there, except for an editorial written in June 1976 for the *Mennonite Reporter* by Hugo Jantz. Without directly referring to Portage, Jantz wrote generally of the sad "tale of two brothers," meaning essentially United Mennonite and Mennonite Brethren who kept bumping into each other and could not seem to find a

wider basis for fellowship. There was a follow-up by the editor, Dave Kroeker, half a year later. When in his "Tale of Two Brothers, Part II," he asked why a Mennonite Brethren member of United Mennonite background but baptized upon his faith by sprinkling, who wished to be ordained by the Mennonite Brethren should be rebaptized. What if the shoe were on the United Mennonite foot? he asked.

While F. C. Peters gave the only reply he could give, constitutionally speaking, Henry Neufeld from the Portage group in 1977 took the occasion to "give a case in point," by referring directly to the situation in Portage la Prairie. Neufeld had resigned from the church council in 1972. He explained the scenario as it had unfolded. After Epp left, the group had resorted to lay leadership, by a group of four, and continued to meet. When another group enquired about purchase of the church, they had rejected the offer without consulting the Manitoba Home Missions Committee. This brought about a review of the situation. Persuasive efforts to reconstitute the group under Mennonite Brethren leadership failed in 1974. In 1980, the Manitoba Conference still held the building hoping that a new start would be possible.¹³

Thompson

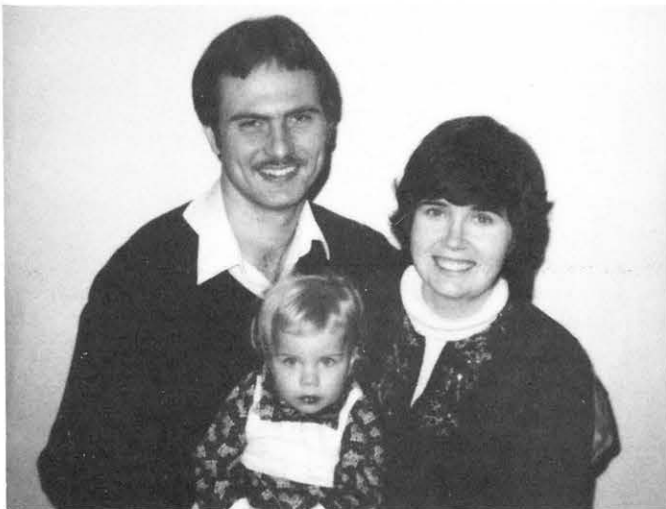
Though Thompson is one of the last churches to be formed as a result of Nikkel's Northern Venture, it is fitting to tell the tale here because, as at Portage, well-intentioned people have tried to build a fellowship made up of two denominations. The question of dual affiliation arose in the 1950s out of fellowships formed here and there by faculty, civil servants, and university students. Ottawa Mennonite was a case in point, also Boston. Another case developed in Thompson, around 1960, under the leadership of John Harder and Henry Letkemann.

Thompson raised the question of holding membership in both the Mennonite Brethren and United Mennonite Conferences in 1968. Letkemann initiated the correspondence with Victor Adrian in 1967 and in the next year requested consideration. The accidental death of Letkemann intervened to heighten the admiration for a person who had a vision for working together "with a minimum amount of friction or suspicion of each other." He had led the congregation to believe it was possible to find "new and practical expressions of our faith."

The correspondence regarding this question shows that the Manitoba brethren advised Thompson, in "practical terms," to be satisfied with a United Mennonite affiliation. There was a clear warning that trying to join the Mennonite Brethren would run into legal entanglements. At a joint meeting of all parties on April 10, 1969, the Thompson members stated they had agreed once again that they wanted to go the path of a dual affiliation. Thompson was told any future leaders requesting ordination would have to be baptized by immersion. The resolution of this very question applied particularly to Ernie Sawatsky, the current leader. In general terms, the Mennonite Brethren would accept as full members, "according to their respective constitutions, all members of the Thompson United Mennonite Church," and with respect to Sawatsky, who was not immersed or ordained, would recognize him "without restrictions" as long as he remained in Thompson. There were also questions arising out of ethical guidelines, but these were clarified without difficulty.¹⁴

This was the background to the application when it came forward in the agenda of 1969. The Manitoba CRC recommended affiliation on a "trial basis" and the discussion seemed to be going favorably when someone rose on a point of order. This person insisted that as this was a question of principle, it required a two-thirds majority vote. Once this procedural point was gained, the recommendation was lost, having failed to get more than 64.3 percent. There were some criticisms from outside, also from Mennonite Brethren, that this was an "unbrotherly act," but the decision held.

Meanwhile, the Thompson church has had at least two leaders of Mennonite Brethren background, Archie Jantzen (1975-76) and Tom Neufeld (1976-79). Before the latter left for doctoral studies at Harvard, he was honored by the church. Neufeld, for one, understood Nikkel's master plan for the north. He accepted the point that it had to include Thompson and believed that it would not be opposed in any way. The Mennonite Brethren thrust there was held up, however, until 1978 because of the "public relations problem." Nikkel then took up the question with the Thompson Christian Council in a spirit of openness and brotherliness. Tom Neufeld was present and noted that "the Thompson Christian Council churches [evangelical] were very open to the intention of the Mennonite Brethren and have taken them in with real openness."



Thompson MB Church, 1982.
Gary & Joyce Sawatsky, Pastoral Couple.

Sometime after Neufeld left in 1979, Gary and Joyce Sawatsky took up residence in Thompson to begin a Mennonite Brethren Church. Tension and hostility have been absent because many recognize there is room for both groups. The Mennonite Brethren church will function first as a store front and a resource center.¹⁵

Northern Venture

In the very year Thompson applied for Mennonite Brethren affiliation, the Manitoba Conference, led by Nikkel, undertook Northern Venture, which eventually included four areas without Thompson: The Pas, Snow Lake, Leaf Rapids, and Cranberry Portage. Except for Leaf Rapids, which lies farther north than Thompson, these all lie between

the fifty-third and fifty-fifth parallels. The distances from Winnipeg are enormous, all more than seven hundred kilometers. Hence, when the decision was made, it seemed most practical for the Nikkels to reside in The Pas, as this is the economic and political hub of the north. Seated as he was in this northern metropole, as we indicated, what Nikkel did here became the pilot project for expansion to other northern towns, some of them one-company towns. First came Christian Day Camps, followed by the lay associates Ron and Ruth Kroeker, who were the first such couple. Some teachers were already in place. Family Bible studies followed, also a ladies' Bible study. The enlarging group adopted the name Neighborhood Life Group, "because of their emphasis on sharing New Life in small neighborhood settings."



Leaf Rapids c. 1970s.
Gilbert & Adeline Berg, Abe and Eva Harder, Elfrieda & James Nikkel.

1972 witnessed the chartering of a new church with eight members. An acquired bakery next to the store front Christian center was transformed into a chapel. By 1975 there were approximately one hundred in attendance. When the Nikkels returned to Winnipeg in 1977, The Pas church was well established and called George and Clara Toews as the first pastoral couple.¹⁶

Leaf Rapids, the third most northerly functional settlement in Manitoba became the scene of church planting almost immediately following the first Christian Day Camps. The first planters were Gilbert and Adeline Berg, who stayed from 1972 to 1978 when they went to Meadow Lake. Well prepared by early experiences in Christian service, as well as in teaching, Berg worked in the Lynn Lake mine where he learned to know the men of the north. With the help of Nikkel, he canvassed the twenty pioneer families living at Leaf Rapids. Their number swelled to 390 by 1972.

Berg began to serve this community before it became viable, so to speak. In 1974, the ordination of Berg to ministry coincided with the organization of a church. They were succeeded by the veterans Jake and Elsie Bergen, who began their ministry twenty-five years earlier in Port Edward among fishermen. Bergen wrote on March 31, 1983.

Since Port Edward we have been serving in several pastorates and then went back into teaching school for ten years. After our children left home we felt led to return to Home Mission work in Manitoba. It is interesting to observe that

we are again in a community that has a mixed population and is very transient. At present we do not know how long this mining town will last, but we have built a church and are trusting the Lord to give the increase. Last week we celebrated a baptism of five believers and the dedication service for the church building.¹⁷



Manitoba Home Mission Leader: (1980s).
The Ken Neufeld family: (1981) Ken and Carolee, with John, James, Paul, Mark, and Jennifer.

As a result of outreach from The Pas using Christian Day Camps, Snow Lake, northeast of The Pas, was declared a "point for future development." The first church planters were Ken and Carolee Neufeld, who started in a store front "Christian Center" in 1974. Ken was a graduate of Winkler and had attended Prairie for one year. By this time, according to Elfrieda Nikkel, "the northern experience had taught the Mission Board to begin with the church format." The Neufelds therefore began with a worship service immediately and other programs followed as the church required them or could staff them. Within a few short years, by 1979, Snow Lake had a new facility as well as membership in the Manitoba Conference. The Neufelds were succeeded in 1981 by Walter and Mary Balzer. The Balzers are senior people who had worked in the Calgary rescue mission as well as at the Bethesda Home in Vineland. After one year they were replaced by John and Anita Klassen.¹⁸

John and Maryanne Nikkel became planters on the grounds of a Presbyterian dissolution that occurred in 1978 in the town of Cranberry Portage. The dissolution was carried out by two resolutions made by the "two remaining Presbyterian members." Their second motion simply stated that "the church should become Mennonite Brethren." Probably never before have the Mennonite Brethren yielded to a command from the Presbyterian or any other mainline church! Yielded to an army of two women at that! Gary Sawatsky became the interim pastor, and in 1980 the John

Nikkels, ordained by their Steinbach church moved north to pastor the Cranberry Portage church and direct Simonhouse Bible Camp.¹⁹

1983

The year 1983 saw the main activity return to metropolitan Winnipeg. Transcona and Selkirk were the scenes of church planting, the Ed Hamms coming from



Paul & Karen Patterson, 1980s.
Director, Christian Resource Center, 700 Notre Dame Ave., Wpg.

British Columbia and the Art Klievers moving to Selkirk from Maples. Paul Patterson became leader of the Cornerstone Christian Fellowship, and James Duong led a Vietnamese and Chinese church sponsored by MCC and four Mennonite conferences.²⁰

D. Saskatchewan

Amalgamation, 1966

Before Saskatchewan could be brought into the church planting era at all, the two districts had finally to merge in a way that had not happened in 1946. The two historic Conferences became truly one in 1966. John D. Goertzen, originally from Main Centre, reviewed the history of the two Conferences. He explained, perhaps for the first time, that the apparent merger of March 1946 in order to support the WCM had not progressed to a true amalgamation. For example, Saskatchewan still had two representatives on the Bible College board after 1948. Goertzen said,

... the way of progress in the Lord's work invariably lies across hitherto unconquered territory of self-life. . . . we, in looking back must say it as a confession, that before long, remnants of unconquered and unsanctified individualism became the fertile soil for new seeds of division. [Insistence on a double representation of MBBC] proved to be the beginning of an open trend that in the end left us with but one area of common



Saskatchewan Board of Church Ministries (BOCM) and Workers (1968).

Seated: Eugene Martens, Jake Schellenberg, Otto Derksen, A. H. Wieler, _____, Ed. Lautermilch, Harold Thiessen.

Standing, middle row: Frank Froese, Adolphe Redekopp, John Wiens, Jake Kehler, William Buller.

Back Row: Dave Esau, Lorlie Barkman, Pete Willms, George Reimer, J. J. Thiessen, Lawrence Redekopp (director).

endeavour: the Saskatchewan M.B. Mission. This state of affairs continuing under the name of Saskatchewan Conference has been confusing to many, and understandably so.

To do away with the confusion, and to correct the mistakes of the past, they were now "publicly solemnizing the (re)-union" on the twentieth anniversary of the working relationship of 1946, and thus creating "one Saskatchewan Conference of Mennonite Brethren." One important consequence of this constitutional change was the adoption of BBI as a Conference school. Since 1927 it had been a "society-operated institution." There seemed every readiness to accept the school that had served the province for forty years. In 1967, therefore, Alberta voted to consider becoming co-sponsor of Bethany¹

Leadership

The brethren who brought Saskatchewan home missions into the church planting era were Lawrence Redekopp (1963-74) and John Reimer (1974-79). Redekopp, a native of Saskatchewan, a graduate of Herbert and a certified teacher, had held two charges, Swift Current and West Portal. Reimer had been pastor since 1952 and had directed the WCCM from 1957 to 1961. We have seen the energy he put into his stay in Ontario. Lawrence inherited eleven churches, which

had a combined membership of only 215. Obviously growth had been slow, the DVBS much diminished, and his church planters were limited to a maximum of twenty-five hundred dollars take-home pay in 1964.

How could the mission be given a new direction and greater financial stability? Certainly the merger of 1966 was a big help. Some aspirations could be fulfilled in 1969. It was a year of reorientation as Lawrence took some of his pastors to a Campus Crusade Institute held at Banff. There they met their counterparts from British Columbia. Even if this may be said to have initiated church growth thinking in Saskatchewan, the brethren there were still torn between the desire to do something for the 485 small towns of Saskatchewan, said for so long to have been "white unto harvest," and the pressure to move into the urban areas. A. H. Wieler of the board wrestled with this problem in that year:

The diminishing population of the rural areas will force us in the direction of ecumenism, first with other M.B. churches in close proximity, but then also with other evangelical denominations. It could be that some of our work could be turned over to others so that duplication does not exist in a sparsely populated area. . . .

The urban centers are growing by leaps and bounds today. The trend of people moving to the

cities does not appear as if it is only temporary and that it might soon be reversed. Thus we too as a mission will have to move with the people and make the cities our heaviest concentration of activity. . . .²

Thought was given to resorting to a circuit ministry, like that of the United Church ministers who serve two and three congregations regularly. Transportation allowances would have to increase, and the cost of building churches in the cities would be greater. He noted too that all the men now available were better educated than formerly and would expect correspondingly better salaries. It was truly a time of reassessment and perhaps shrinkage.

The work had not been entirely without success. Of thirty Mennonite Brethren churches in Saskatchewan in 1971, nine had their beginnings "under our mission program." In 1972, just before taking up his new assignment at Lanigan, Redekopp reported that the Mission was now concentrating on churches to be discussed below: Foam Lake, Moose Jaw, North Battleford, Blaine Lake, undertaking a pioneer work in Prince Albert, and also doing campus work at the University of Saskatchewan, not to mention DVBS and bookrack evangelism. Fortunately, the Mission was able to double the take-home pay from eight years earlier, not calculating inflation.³

Re-evaluation

Saskatchewan soon felt the vigor and rigor of John Reimer. Though a new constitution was written some time after the merger of 1966, it was not until ten years later that a new division of labor created a Board of Church Ministries (BOCM) corresponding to the Board of Church Extension in other provinces. Taking a leaf out of the Manitoba Conference book where he had served as pastor in Steinbach, Reimer brought forward a new division of labor consisting of three commissions. One would carry church ministries, a second extension work, and a third Indian ministries.

As a result of this restructuring, which created three three-member commissions, decisions were made to discontinue DVBS as a conference, concentrate rather on church planting, and focus clearly on Indian work without neglecting the established churches. In line with this policy, Reimer surveyed the field he had inherited. Focusing on Blaine Lake as an example, he asked whether it was not time to break "the very strong maternal sense of responsibility for these subsidized churches." Had the Mission ever challenged Blaine Lake's church council to ask what it could do to be independent even though the group was small? As a matter of fact, Blaine Lake responded to such prodding and became independent.

When the Reimers left to return to their home and work in Harrison Hot Springs, they were succeeded by Helmut Schroeder. Then in 1982 the ministries were divided among John Wiens as church planter, who planned to settle in Yorkton, Ben Hoepfner as director of church ministries, and Reuben Block as director of the Indian Fellowship Center.⁴

In the very year Reimer left the province, its Conference received two contradictory reviews in the pages of the *Mennonite Brethren Herald*. The positive picture of September 1979 was an editorial view. It looked at Saskatchewan from the perspective of new found wealth, at

last, after having sought for so many years to do so many things for God in a relatively poor province. Sam Willems was honored with a "cover story," so to speak. Another view, an inside one by Menno Martens of Swift Current, showed a growing disparity between what was being attempted in traditional small-town Saskatchewan and the professionalization of the burgeoning big-city congregations who were supposedly offering larger salaries for associate pastoral positions than could be paid for interns, a new system introduced by Reimer. It was all too apparent that imported church planters would be more expensive than home-grown missionaries. Would Saskatchewan be able to compete with British Columbia and Manitoba for them?

The disparity was brought to *Mennonite Brethren Herald* readers, apparently, because some individuals had openly criticized Nutana Church in Saskatoon for using a "professional psychological consulting firm" to raise monies. They argued that these "modern, well researched, persuasive marketing techniques, constitute deception. . . ." Whether the assertion was warranted or not, this was a long distance from the Bethany Prayer Band that had built a mission on the equivalent of "the widow's mite."⁵

Churches New and Old

One cluster of small-town churches remained partly under the concern of the Board of Church Ministries in the southern half of the province, namely, Lucky Lake, Beechy, and Elbow, all north of the traditional center of Conference life in the south, Herbert. Lucky Lake's early history has been told. J. J. and Helen Thiessen served the church for a number of years. They were followed by Ed Epp and Ed Giesbrecht who also served Beechy. Elbow once had a Mennonite Brethren church made up of *Russlaender*, but removals to British Columbia greatly diminished the number of families.

In 1962, the Conference offered assistance and sent Jacob and Agnes Schmidt. He was a graduate of Elim, in Yarrow, and MBBC. When he left for the Gospel Light Hour in Winnipeg, David Esau, from Aldergrove, replaced him in 1966. David and Anita Esau tried to extend the field to Central Butte and Hawarden. "The field is scattered, but the Gospel here is necessary." When the Esaus did not, however, stay beyond 1971, the solution for leadership here was found in self-employed persons like John Heinrichs, a farmer, who took responsibility in 1976.

More vibrancy appeared at the Hillside Christian Fellowship of nearby Beechy, now served by Helmut Schroeder. Many years earlier, when the *Russlaender* came, there were eighty-four members. The depression drove nearly everyone away. Until 1963 there was a succession of self-employed leaders. Since then, various men have served either fulltime, or in combination with a ministry at Lucky Lake as well. Schroeder has been the leader since 1977.⁶

Foam Lake

One of the old churches that caused some cold comfort in 1979 was Foam Lake, where dissolution was reversed all in one year's time. Foam Lake, lying along the Yellowhead Route, far east of Lanigan, was always considered an "organized church." In the thirties there were more than



Foam Lake church building & manse.



Foam Lake, Sask.
John Siemens,
pastor, 1976.

fifty members, but they had dwindled to seventeen two decades later. Under the constitution of 1952-53, and served by Dalmeny graduates Alvin and Irma Penner, it became a mission station of the WCM.

The Penners were followed by the Jake Kehlrs, who had begun their ministry in Lindal more than a decade earlier. During that time there were frequent reports of conversions and baptisms. Then all was quiet until 1971 when Nick Willems came to speak on "prophecy and fulfillment" using colorful slides, and BBI teams drove out to support the campaign.

Though a revival seems to have added numbers, the real test came under John Siemens' ministry in 1979. Once a new church enlargement had been dedicated and the subsidy was being reduced annually by 20 percent, it became clear that the real problem lay with Mennonite Brethren polity, in spite of protestations in the early 1960s that second class status was to be lifted.

In 1979, the church dissolved, not for spiritual reasons, but for organizational ones. It seemed to the Board of Church Ministries that this was the only way to clarify the situation. The church would be reinstated if and when members accepted "Mennonite Brethren principles and practices." It had been decided that, for this location, the Mennonite Brethren should not try to be all kinds of evangelicals to all men. Someone called "name withheld" wrote the *Mennonite Brethren Herald* to state that, even though the church was reinstated, "not all the members are back full-fledged. And the church does not go on all the rules of the conference." Fortunately, the fellowship did carry on under the lay leadership of Ben Brown, and then the pastoral service of Dan Stobbe.⁷

Saskatchewan Extension

One can see from the thrust of this period that Saskatchewan, in spite of the concerns for gospel witness in small towns, tended to focus on the cities. In the south, a new work was begun in Moose Jaw, an attempt was made in Grenfell (a small town), and a church planter, John Wiens was sent to Yorkton. In the north, North Battleford, Prince Albert, Lanigan, and Lloydminster were sited by either the Mission under Redekopp or the Board of Church Ministries under Reimer.

Moose Jaw

Moose Jaw had many Mennonites, but they were not

gathered into a Mennonite congregation. Mennonite Brethren particularly were located in the Alliance Church. Nevertheless, there were some in the late fifties and early sixties who were interested in forming a church. Among these were Eric Schroeder from Kitchener, and Rudy Wiebe and Ed Olfert, who had become involved in the United Handicap Center. A small group, meeting for prayer and Bible study since about 1960, requested assistance from the Mission during the winter of 1963. Assistance was promised on the condition that they would work toward the formation of a Mennonite Brethren church.



Moose Jaw, Sask. (c. 1970).
Lorlie and Deanna Barkman, and their children.

The first church planter was Lorlie Barkman from Flowing Well. He was a graduate of Bethany and took up work in Moose Jaw in the fall of 1964. He remembers taking up the telephone directory and selecting Mennonite-sounding names as a point of contact and an indication of interest. From meeting in homes, he and his wife, Deanna, went to a recreational center, and then to the Handicap Center.

In 1966-67 the group was able to buy a lot in Regal Heights from the United Church, and there they built and dedicated a church in 1970. With some zeal and conviction, Barkman wrote the readers of the Mission's *Challenger* that they were not there only for the "physically poor, the unchurched and children," but for the "average citizens" of Moose Jaw who probably tended to believe another clergyman who had stated recently in the press that the miracles surrounding Jesus' life were "myth." Barkman wrote,

This is no easy task and requires volumes of preparation. We have been afraid of [Mr. Average Citizen] because, for one thing, we have the false notion that they are immovably settled in their religious ideas; and secondly we have not learned how to communicate with them. But God is teaching us and we have inroads.⁸

Barkman, with the acknowledged help of many families like Rudi and Leanna Fast, was able to bring Regal Heights

Mennonite Brethren Church to a position of self-support by 1974. When he left to take a position with Mennonite Brethren Communications in 1975, Leo and Hilda Siemens of British Columbia succeeded them.⁹

Grenfell

Grenfell, east of Regina on the Trans-Canada Highway, has about fifteen hundred people. There were some Mennonite Brethren living there, David and Anne Froese, for example, who would like to have had some assistance from the Board of Church Ministries. Also, Richard and Joan Hicks from Willingdon in Burnaby resided there and were conducting Bible classes. John and Beatrice Klassen heeded this "Macedonian call" in the fall of 1976, urged on by John Reimer, and began conducting Bible studies and establishing social contacts. Hicks, however, explained to the 1978 conference why Grenfell did not grow. It was evident, in the last analysis, that "the folks in Grenfell were quite content to remain with only Bible studies." They were not prepared to energize themselves into a church-planting program as envisioned in the late seventies. The Klassens reconsidered their commitment and took the church in Boissegave, meanwhile, and then, in 1981, the Regal Heights church in Moose Jaw, as successors to the Siemens.¹⁰

North Battleford

It has been all too evident that all of the major thrusts of every form of extension have been to the north. The Yellowhead Route still seemed the favorite concourse for the gospel. Except for an attempt to establish a church in Prince Albert, every new urban or small-town witness devolved on this famous Route: North Battleford, Lanigan, and Lloydminster as examples. North Battleford, of historic significance, straddles the North Saskatchewan about 140 kilometers west of Saskatoon. When Arno and Lena Fast moved south from Meadow Lake in 1960 to take up this new challenge, North Battleford had a population of eleven thousand. Because of rapid urbanization, one motivation was to recapture or prevent the loss of members to other churches. In answer to the related question as to why Battleford should have another evangelical church when there were only an estimated five hundred evangelicals in the whole urban area, Fast replied that, "if we are just interested in establishing another Mennonite church, then we maybe shouldn't bother. . . . But if our aim is really to reach the unsaved with the Gospel, we have a great field."

The church began to build, and dedicated its attractive facility in late 1965. Though valiant efforts were made to bring about church growth, when the Fast left for Winnipeg's Logan Avenue work in 1969, there were only nineteen members. They were succeeded by Henry and Clara Janzen from Elm Creek, who were able to bring the church to a position of self-support in 1972. As Frank Willems (a brother to Henry and Nick) explained it, by this time they had drawn the urbanized, the retired, consultants, and professionals engaged in agribusiness from "among the best people from the good suburbs."

Though the membership has not mushroomed and still runs under fifty, there is a vibrant witness in North Battleford under John and Gloria Block. His "heritage supper" in March 1983 showed up the diverse religious traditions

represented in this church. They honored four great leaders: Menno Simons, John Knox, Alfred Edersheim, and Georgi Vins, thus expressing "tribute to the faiths whose heritage the church shares."¹¹

Lanigan

Situated about 130 kilometers east of Saskatoon, Lanigan became "the first Industrial Town" in Saskatchewan when a potash mine opened nearby. From five hundred people in 1963, the population more than tripled in six years. In this case, the Mennonite Brethren seemed to benefit from a diminishing Alliance work. In fact, the Alliance officials asked the Mennonite Brethren "to take over their work." Redekopp was able to purchase the Alliance building for four thousand dollars and, with a nucleus of Mennonite Brethren began a work with families. In 1975, the Christian Fellowship Church joined the Saskatchewan Conference and became self-supporting soon after. This fellowship is blessed with "talent — pianists, soloists, lay-preachers and a goodly number of capable Sunday school teachers." Because the name Mennonite Brethren signified ethnic identity, and because it seemed indistinguishable from the United Mennonite, the Mennonite name was dropped.¹²



The Lawrence Redekopp family, when he was director of the Saskatchewan Mission (1963-73). Lawrence and Martha, with Barbara, Calvin, Wayne, and Elwood.

Lloydminster

Lloydminster has the unenviable distinction of being split in two between Alberta and Saskatchewan on Route 16. Both provincial Conferences were prepared to support a work here, but an agreement was reached that Saskatchewan would work in Lloyd while keeping Alberta informed. When Reimer first went to Lloyd, a burgeoning city of about 12,500 in 1978, he dismayed the Baptist and Alliance at first. They could not believe that he was serious about planting a church there. The fact was that in the Baptist church the deacon couples and 80 percent of the council were Mennonite Brethren. Reimer reported,

It took quite some time to realign their thinking about the M.B. church. They continuously made mention of *us reaching our people* [sic] and finally I believe I got the message through to them that

we were not interested in reaching merely our people but that we wanted to reach the community for Christ.

Reimer considered himself fortunate to have found Eric and Margaret Penner of British Columbia. He was a graduate of North-West Baptist Seminary in Vancouver, and had worked with Herbert Brandt in Richmond and with John Balzer in Williams Lake. Though Reimer had put together a "penetration Team," after one year Helmut Schroeder reported that the Penners needed much encouragement and "colonizers" to help. "Church planting is neither simple nor easy," he affirmed. Meanwhile, the Mission had purchased the Church of God building. As it turned out, Penner resigned the position effective August 1, 1980, but remained resident in Lloydminster. Herb and Betty Schmidt succeeded in 1980 but found growth quite slow. As reported in the *Challenger*, attendance in 1982 averaged about thirty-five.¹³

Prince Albert

The attempt to plant a church in the northern city of Prince Albert on the North Saskatchewan River resulted in great disappointment. Going there seemed most logical, given the new thrust into urban growth areas. Did it matter that the United Mennonite and Alliance churches were there already? Nevertheless, a decision was reached to invite John Penner of the Northern Canada Evangelical Mission to begin a work in Prince Albert. Though he and his wife had twenty-five years of experience, they left after one year because, the Board admitted, they had been asked to do something "too difficult" for them, coming from work among one class "to begin a work in a higher middle class section without even a church building. . . ."

They found a replacement however in Abe and Alvina Klassen from Vineland. The plan was to begin with a large DVBS program in 1969. Klassen added a "Dial-a-Meditation," which generated two hundred calls a day. As a result of systematic pursuit of these contacts, Klassen reported forty-two conversions in two years. Unfortunately, sixteen of these moved away and nine withdrew for various reasons.

When the Klassens withdrew after three years, having recorded fifty-five decisions, it seemed time to reassess. At the 1974 convention, Saskatchewan brethren raised the more philosophical question involved in nearly all of these new starts: were they justified in going into urban areas with well-established United Mennonite, Alliance, Evangelical Free, and other churches? Should Mennonite Brethren be expected to change their affiliation after years in the Alliance church? Is the nucleus necessary? Is a building necessary to plant a church successfully among middle class people? These questions, and arguments for returning to small towns, had a direct bearing on Prince Albert. A motion to pursue the work energetically was tabled in 1974 and left there.¹⁴

The Indian Fellowship Center

When questioned about possible contact with native Canadians during the course of ministry, almost 30 percent of Mennonite Brethren home missionaries stated they had worked with one or more Indians as part of their ministry. Yet, today, only one Mennonite Brethren ministry to

Natives is underway in Canada. That is the Indian Fellowship Center in Saskatoon, directed by Reuben Block. The ministry of Reinhold Fast, supported by Alberta, is really the work of the Northern Canada Evangelical Mission.

Peter Boschmann, formerly a missionary at Harrison Hot Springs, who then worked with Indians, became moderator of the Saskatchewan Conference when John Reimer was field director. Boschmann had a vision of what might be done in Native ministries in Saskatoon. Two projects were undertaken in 1974, one a home for girls on the Mary-Martha model, and the other a drop-in center. This ministry to Indians represented the largest share of the Conference budget for some years. The purpose of the home was to meet the need of "the whole person," especially for girls who needed assistance in the urban setting. When the Christian Métis couple who had served as house parents left in 1977, the veteran workers Norman and Mary Fehr came to replace them. After two years they left and the home was closed for lack of use. It had been a difficult work.¹⁵



Indian Fellowship Center Personnel, 1978.

Left: Reuben & Edith Block family. Timothy, Lynn, Daniel & David.

Right: Mary & Norman Fehr, Timothy & Randall.

Reuben and Edith Block took up the challenge of the Indian ministry and the drop-in center in 1974. Reuben was a graduate of Bethany and had had a variety of experiences in ministry in Winnipeg. From the beginning, his fear was that the Conference would expect results too soon. Studies of ministries undertaken by others have demonstrated that it may take a generation for a breakthrough. John Reimer was aware of this, and warned the Conference in 1978 not to expect results too soon, even though the response to the Fellowship Center was sometimes overwhelming in terms of numbers. Indians seemed to be moving to Saskatoon by the thousands. "Even so, we might still call them the unseen people." Block reported that many were bound by addictions, while others were "holding respectable jobs and positions. Many are in places of responsibility and education." Many are trying to help their own people to adjust in an urban environment.

By 1981 Block saw the possibility of building a native congregation based on those who "had relatively stable social and financial positions." Since then, however, Block has found it just as hard to sell native ministries to Mennonite

Brethren as it is to sell the gospel to the natives. Both have deeply ingrained prejudices. Whereas there are lay people on both sides who are ready, the "ecclesiastical professionals" fear the draining away of money from projects they fear will not succeed. There are too many Mennonite Brethren with "one talent" who see God as a "hard taskmaster" whose return on the investment in native ministries will be scant. In foreign fields, Mennonite Brethren have been able to cross cultures, but they have not done so well in cross-cultural situations at home. Since Reimer and Boschmann left, Block finds himself somewhat isolated from the Conference. On the other side, the Indians are deeply alienated, possessing a "transferred bitterness against all whites, and only a second generation of Indian Christians will be able to deal with racism and prejudice." Nevertheless, there is in existence a Native Mennonite Brethren church of twelve members in Saskatoon as of 1982.¹⁶

E. British Columbia

When one visits the northern areas in which British Columbian brethren have located missions since 1960, considerable romance is added by a contemplation of the places "where rivers meet:" Kamloops (North Thompson and Thompson), Quesnel (Quesnel and Fraser), and Prince George (Nechako and Fraser). The brethren did not use romance as an organizing principle, however, and neither can we. Nevertheless, there are five fabled areas in focus in the north in addition to Vanderhoof, which is now reopened: Fort St. John and Dawson Creek, Prince George, Quesnel, and Williams Lake.

North Peace and Northgate

Colonization evangelism was perhaps at its most organized in the Peace River country. There farming, power, oil, and lumber promised development. The earliest DVBS team consisted of Leo Siemens, David Loewen (later working at Arnes), and Karl Janzen. Irwin Klaassen became the true colonizer, however, in 1959 when he settled near Fort St. John, eventually acquiring a farm and a position with an oil company. Four families requested help from John Reimer, and Klaassen was asked to head up the work at first. Peter and Betty Boschmann arrived in the fall of 1962. At that time they organized a church of thirteen members, called the North Peace Mennonite Brethren Church. Under John and Erna Schmidt, who stayed for ten years, the church became self-supporting as early as 1971. Though the church, prepared by these graduates of Clearbrook and Coaldale, took the name Mennonite Brethren, they had maintained an open, almost nondenominational stance. North Peace was an "accepting church." Sometimes it was even crudely called the "garbage collector." Presently, pastor Leo Siemens and many members as well as a second new church are sited in the northwest and middle class part of this unusual town.¹

Where Fort St. John has had an even development, Dawson Creek's has been most uneven. The beginnings in this town at Mile 0 of the Alaska Highway parallel those of Fort St. John. Some of the same persons pioneered DVBS. Though colonization did not blossom, some young couples settled there for a time. Among them were John and Lori Isaac and the Dan Reimers, who left the Alliance church. Jake and Katie Neufeld were sent there by the WCCM in April 1962. At first there was some resistance to the idea of



M.B. Mission of B.C., Workers, October 1964.
Back: Walter Heinrichs, Peter C. Penner, Mrs. Penner, Esther and George Penner, Laura and Helmut Klassen, George Martens, Sue Neufeld, Elsie Balzer, Adeline and Herb Neufeld, John Schmidt.
Middle: Alvin Penner, Victor Stobbe, J. H. Friesen, John Esau,

George Braun, H. G. Classen, Aaron Schmidt, Peter Boschmann, Art Isaac, Paul Unger.
Front: Jacob Reimer, Helen Stobbe, Leona Friesen, Eva Esau, Rose Braun, Tena Classen, Kathren Schmidt, Betty Boschmann, Edna Isaac, Anne Unger.



Dawson Creek, 1960s.
Leo and Hildegard Siemens, Lorraine and Elaine.

a Mennonite Brethren church, but one was organized under Neufeld by 1963.

It was shortly after Leo Siemens had left his social work position to become the pastor in 1966, that the church suffered a severe setback. An economic downturn occurred when the Canadian Forces Base was closed out, which brought about a wholesale exodus, including 75 percent of the church's council. As a result, the calibre of leadership was weakened and the atmosphere changed. Nevertheless, under Alvin Penner's guidance, the church reorganized and regained its financial position and became self-supporting.

Another problem developed in Dawson Creek. The congregation tended to divide into traditional evangelicals and the charismatics. Among the latter were members of "Women Aglow." As a result, the church split in February 1976, and George Anastasiadas, the pastor for three years, left for the Fraser Valley. Even though the "extreme

charismatics" walked out of that February meeting, there were still two identifiable groups remaining. John and Anna Braun, talented in music and art, did not, for example, identify with Colin Wilson, a body shop worker, who became the leader of the charismatic group. John E. and Anne Friesen were sent to Dawson in 1979 to bring stability to the Northgate Community Church. John had had much experience in California churches and at Broadway, Chilliwack. With the help of Ray Good as moderator, he purged out those who wanted "total physical involvement in worship." In consequence of the succession of crises, the church suffered the embarrassment of financial dependence once again and had to improve the building that had been neglected.²

"Where Rivers Meet"

The Mennonite Brethren who lived in Prince George in 1959 requested assistance in starting a church. Five couples and three singles made the request. When John Esau, whom we have seen at County Line, reported in 1962, there were fifteen teachers and a potential membership of about forty. They had begun in a working class district and built the Peden Hill Church. (Today it is used by Orthodox Ukrainians.) Though instances abound where Mennonite Brethren have had difficulty relating to Old Colony people, in Prince George they had the happy experience of baptizing members of a Dyck family, Isaac and his mother. For some time during the ministry of Helmut Klassen, some Christians characterized as "yippies," and charismatic, created somewhat of a rift. Once that problem was cleared up, the members, who by now lived elsewhere, found themselves commuting to Peden Hill. Under Neil Funk this was rectified and a new church was built in Westwood, which reflected the middle class image of most of the members. Nick and Betty Willems answered the call to Westwood after their years of service to the WCM in Saskatchewan and some years of notable experience as evangelists in many parts of the globe. Today Westwood's congregation has almost outgrown its facilities, which seat 375.³

Judging by the long-time service of the two couples who



Dawson Creek, B.C., 1980s.
John E. and Anne Friesen, pastoral couple.



Williams Lake, B.C., 1972.
The Paul Unger family: Ken, Paul, Karen, Anne, and Stan. (Note: names run right to left).

pioneered and built up Caribou Bethel Church in Williams Lake, theirs must have been a relatively happy experience. Paul and Anne Unger pioneered here, beginning in 1964, and John and Bertha Balzer found their niche here in 1973. Unger had studied at Yarrow's Elim and MBBC and had taught for several years in Ontario Bible School.

The work in Williams Lake was difficult at first. Another man had declined to go there as the polity in force seemed too restrictive, the salary too low, and "no building on site." Undaunted, the Ungers persevered and successfully brought forward a community of believers of diverse backgrounds. They organized a church as early as 1965. The first church building was erected in 1967, and the members were self-supporting by 1971. In line with the desire to keep an open fellowship, Unger raised a question as to whether non-resistance was conditional to church membership. Jake H. Friesen replied that it was more or less agreed that it "ought not" to be a "prerequisite."



Williams Lake, B.C., 1983.
John Balzer, with one of his many baptismal groups, Caribou Bethel church: Sharon Buchholtz, Norma Mitchell, Maggie Keatly, Allen Forseth, Mary Wassenaar, Sally McCarthy, Bev Grimaldi, and Stephen Grimaldi.

Since his arrival, John Balzer has been singularly blessed with results and baptisms, and Caribou has benefited from his exuberance. In 1980 the provincial Conference met there, and the delegates liked what they saw. The resolution of thanks read: "May you experience God's abiding peace as you continue to serve Him at Williams Lake in the spirit that



The new rebuilt Caribou Bethel Church, 1983, with a seating capacity of 650.

your name Bethel implies: 'surely the Lord is in this place.'" On Sunday, June 27, 1982, Balzer led in a planned sod-turning for the reconstruction of the second church, badly burned in a fire three months earlier⁴

Quensel is a latecomer to the Conference, though there have been some families of Mennonite Brethren background there for many years. Westpark Chapel came to Nick Dyck's attention in 1982 as a result of contact with John Balzer at Williams lake. The pastor, Richard Andres, attended a Baptist Seminary in Los Angeles, which held to Landmarkism. The chief principle of this branch of Baptists is the affirmation that one must be baptized in the succession to John the Baptist. In true Landmarkism there is no apostolic authority without proof of "the unbroken chain." The Westpark Chapel turned away from this completely about 1975-76. Though Andres considered both the Associated Gospel and the Mennonite Brethren, the group was prepared to accept Dyck's presentation of the Mennonite Brethren Confession of Faith. The Chapel membership voted unanimously to take their stand with the



Kamloops, B.C., 1972.
Valleyview church, baptismal service, with candidates John and Joan Evans.
Norman Fehr, left, and Jake Balzer, pastor, right.



Valleyview Bible Church, Kamloops.
A baptismal group with John Klassen, pastor (1978-82).

Mennonite Brethren and to receive assistance in the development of the work. Westpark will particularly welcome the financial assistance the British Columbia Conference can give. Attached to the Chapel is an American Christian day school.⁵

The Interior

Farther south, in areas now usually called Caribou country, lie three church planting situations, at about the fifty-first parallel: Kamloops, Mile 108, and Armstrong. Kamloops, very spectacular by moonlight, was settled where the two Thompson rivers meet. The settlement by Mennonite Brethren, very recent by comparison, resembles that of the more northerly towns already covered. In 1968 four families wanted help from the Board of Church Extension to begin a church. Almost precisely at the same time, the United Mennonites were urging the planting of a church in Kamloops. The Mennonite Brethren, however, wanted to focus on Valleyview, an area to the east of Kamloops proper. All told, there was a greater Kamloops community approaching forty thousand, making Kamloops the "hub" of the Interior.

For a time it looked as though Pentecostals might preempt the plan for church extension but careful investigations showed it was feasible to plant another church. Jake Balzer, a brother to John, was called as church planter. He had been educated at Coaldale, MBBC and MBBS. He came to Kamloops in 1970, fresh from Fresno. Before that he had served at Salem Church in Winnipeg. By 1971 the group was organized as a church and planned a building in Valleyview. It was a result of Valleyview's influence that a man named Dobell donated a seventy-two-acre property at Gardom Lake to British Columbia Conference for camp purposes.⁶

Just east and north of Kamloops on the old Caribou Trail, marked off by old coach houses, lies Mile 108, just above the better known 100 Mile House. The Block brothers, Henry and Arthur, who once sang in the Crusaders quartet, had acquired a large acreage near Mile 108 and planned to develop it, not for ranching, but for recreation. The whole story cannot be told here. Mile 108 was to be a "getaway," 264 miles from Vancouver. At the request of the Blocks in 1974, Harold Penner was sent there to see whether he could "gain response for evangelical witness."



Mile 108 Chapel, 100 Mile House, B.C. (c. 1975). Henry Block, Harold Penner, established the witness at Mile 108.

The response was so good that Ralph and Linda Klassen were asked to take this assignment in 1975. An ordered church community, though non-denominational at first, developed quickly. Block Brothers donated five acres as the site for a chapel. Once the attractive chapel was built, various campaigns brought attendance to about 120 in a community of 500. Ralph Klassen chartered a congregation in 1975 with 65 members. Meanwhile, Henry Block had built a garden adjacent to the chapel, which told the story of the life and passion of Christ. This became a magnetic tourist attraction.



Mile 108 Chapel, 1982. The Garden built by Henry Block, and the Chapel and Bookstore.

Once the Klassens had left, there was a rapid turnover of leadership, yet conversions continued "reminiscent of readings in the Book of Acts." The Chapel became self-supporting in March 1979, but there was as yet no official linkage with the Conference. At a council meeting on April 21, 1978, the Chapel had approved the idea of "elders," and Henry Block was made elder and moderator until a new pastor should come. In August, Block, who had no official standing in the Mennonite Brethren Conference, baptized nine persons in the Garden pool. In spite of this act of independence, the church council affirmed that while it wanted to remain as non-denominational as possible, the Chapel favored a "continuing and growing relationship with the M.B. conference of B.C. in terms of fellowship and ministry, and that we will endeavour to work out a vehicle to make that possible in a more formal sense." This was just before Harold Penner returned in 1978.

In a rather complex set of events, a "severe" split occurred when Penner and "most of the congregation, including all of the elders [except Block], left the church because of differences of philosophy of church." When Penner left for Fresno, Lyall Johnson became the leader of his Caribou Christian Life group, which met in a school at Mile 108. This charismatic group elected to remain independent. All told, it is apparent that the Chapel's earlier linkage, tenuous as it was, had been broken, especially since another split occurred, leaving at least three groups where at first there was one. Since then the Conference has "relinquished its trusteeship of the property."⁷

A more promising area of church planting is Armstrong,

in the midst of dairy country north of Kelowna and Vernon. In 1976 Hank Wiebe, a chartered accountant, together with seven or eight families, began to meet for the purpose of organizing a church. Though they were of diverse backgrounds, the Board of Church Extension helped them to obtain Jake Balzer as church planter. Very quickly the church went through the stage of planting, building, and dedication of new facilities. In 1981, Armstrong realized a membership of forty-eight and by the time the Balzers left in 1982, the church was self-supporting.⁸

To the south, in the famous Okanagan Valley, the Mennonite Brethren Conference received an entire congregation, buildings and all, from the former Grace Gospel Church in Penticton. Members from Grace and the Alliance church, many of whom were former Mennonite Brethren, formed a new congregation of fifty-seven members, accepted the Mennonite Brethren Confession of Faith, and were welcomed into the Conference in 1982. Henry Unrau served as the interim pastor.

Still further south, at the junction of Highways 3 and 3A lies Keremeos, where the Cawston Christian Fellowship was formed, also in 1982. Nick Dyck reported to the Conference that "after an informal meeting where the doctrines and policies of our conference were explained, and a few weeks of prayerful consideration, they voted unanimously to request leadership and fellowship." Again, he and Unrau provided interim leadership until John and Eva Esau moved there in January. Under Esau's leadership a church was chartered on April 25, 1982.⁹

The Lower Fraser Valley

Two areas north of the Fraser River deserve attention. One, Lake Errock, resembles a more traditional work, and the other is the sequel to development at Mountain View, near Mission. Lake Errock was actually a work of the Clearbrook Mennonite Brethren Church. Clearbrook teachers drove there every Sunday in their mission to loggers and dairy farmers. In 1962 they found Art Isaac of East Chilliwack as their pastor. He soon organized a church, made it to be self-supporting, and stayed until poor health forced him to resign in 1978. Actually, the stability of the church depended for many years on the commuters from Clearbrook. After the Isaacs left for La Glace, Alberta, the church required a subsidy for a short time. Though some couples like Helmut and Lydia Doerksen who served at Bienenberg, Switzerland, for many years came back to Lake Errock because they considered it "home," the area in fact had very limited potential for growth, nestled as it is "between the mountains" along the Loughheed Highway. Had the criticisms of Jack Block of 1963 been applied to this area, perhaps no work would have been planted here.¹⁰

Charisma

Farther east, as indicated in an earlier chapter, the McConnell Creek mission had moved to the Loughheed Highway, east of Mission. Because a split developed there in 1981, one must try to account for it. Splits are usually considered disruptive and discrediting to Christian witness. Without a doubt a strong charismatic tendency had developed, as we have indicated in our discussion of Hartley Smith under the

heading of Dartmouth. This reflected the inroads made by the "New Penetration," inaugurated in 1960 by Dennis Bennett, a story well known.

According to the "old" view of the gifts of the Spirit, as interpreted by Mennonite Brethren leadership in the previous period, one did not require outward manifestations of the Spirit's work. What Christians must do is "behave" according to the gospel in everyday life and be active witnesses without fear. After 1960 there was a growing desire in many Mennonite Brethren congregations, especially in the mission churches, to have a "deeper encounter" with God. Without identifying congregations beyond his general focus on the Abbotsford/Mission area, Lloyd Mackey explored the charismatic movement in two articles in 1971. He noted that the "Jesus People Army" had some influence in this area, also affecting the teaching faculty and students at Columbia Bible Institute. For the most part, however, he claimed that enrollments and membership were not affected seriously, as the charisma was kept pretty much an "in-house" affair.

With particular reference to the Mountain View Chapel, however, it was evident from articles prepared by Herb Neufeld that he and his congregation were seeking a deeper encounter with God. Neufeld wrote, "Churches do not lack for scholars and great minds. They do lack men and women who can and will be channels of God in our day. They lack for that in Pentecost which is *repeatable and accessible* [emphasis added]." Neufeld found new sources of strength for ministry in himself and in the transformed lives of others when those insights, as regained, were applied.



Herb Neufeld, 1961.
Mountain View church pastor.

If this was charisma in practice, under Neufeld, it was moderate in its external manifestations. Nevertheless, the charismatic movement caused great concern in Mennonite Brethren and United Mennonite circles. Some reaffirmed the old position and combated the new: it is not necessary to have more of the Spirit, but that the Spirit possess more of the Christian. While David Ewert appreciated the evidences of revival in many areas and acknowledged that there might be certain manifestations of joy in renewal,

nevertheless he warned in his Denver study paper on the Holy Spirit, that emotional life here on earth cannot be kept "at a high pitch constantly," and that it is wrong for renewed believers to make their experiences *normative* for others. Nevertheless, in Mountain View, during the next two incumbencies, that of Hartley Smith and Victor Stobbe, the congregation became more charismatic as an expected part of the weekly services or, as many would have said in the 1950s, like the "Pentecostals."¹¹

Hartley and Mareta Smith came to Mountain View from Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. There, as we have noted, he became acquainted with Walter Epp who recommended Smith to Mountain View as the suitable successor to Herb Neufeld. We have already noted how Smith pursued the matter of charismatic power and how this worked out when he returned to Dartmouth in 1975. During the ministry of Victor and Helen Stobbe (1973-1981), this charismatic element seemed characteristic of the church, though subdued. During this period the *Mennonite Brethren Herald* featured many letters for and against the charismatic movement, while some were seeking a balanced view. In any case, the upshot of it for Mountain View was that a split developed in 1981. Under the leadership of Joe and Fran Marsioli from the Assemblies of God, the New Covenant Church of Mission joined with the Mountain View Gospel Chapel, and the other group formed the Mission Church Fellowship under Jake and Esther Balzer, who came from Armstrong. The Marsioli group withdrew from the Conference in December 1982. The great point of difference was the doctrine of the "baptism of the Holy Spirit" as a second experience. It was the search for this experience which Mennonite Brethren theologians from Unruh to Ewert and long before them had discouraged.¹²

Metropolitan Vancouver

Those who visit Vancouver only intermittently are startled into the reality of a mushrooming metropolitan area which will doubtless engulf Abbotsford before too long, unless of course urbanization is reversed. Even before the retirement of George L. Braun as director in 1972, North Vancouver and Coquitlam were surveyed as potential church planting sites. Two years later, families in the area of Port Coquitlam were meeting regularly, and John F. Klassen of Yarrow was asked to become their first pastor. Meeting at first in Trinity United Church, this group organized in 1975 as Burke Mountain Bible Fellowship. When Klassen left to become an associate at Richmond Bethel, interim leadership was provided by Nick Dyck, Pat Fadden, and Henry Unrau, who had moved from Lethbridge.

It was during this interim period that a lot was purchased in this burgeoning area of one hundred thousand people where some lots ran as high as \$120,000. Even more important, in 1980-81, realizing that there was an "internal problem" that had plagued the congregation from the beginning, Henry Unrau, supported by Harry R. Loewen as the new church planter, took a firm stand, asking certain members "to leave and seek fellowship elsewhere." Saturation evangelism, baptisms, and the elimination of a potential problem, gave the church a rapid start. With the help of Killarney as a sister church, the congregation blossomed and became independent by 1983 when a new meeting place was dedicated. The church was renamed Eagle Ridge Bible Fellowship.¹³

Another look at church growth in Vancouver brings the reader some surprises. In 1960, as Pacific Grace Mission carried the work forward to a mission church status under H. G. Classen, the rescue aspect of the work was separated. With the help of Lloyd McMahon, a convert, and of Tom Rourke, over one thousand men were registered as having made contact or used the Mission facility at 382 Powell. They had been fed both spiritually and physically. Even then the "Rescue Mission" stood under serious review in 1963. In principle there was support for the cause, but there was no worker. When John and Eva Esau returned from Prince George, they were prepared to assume responsibility.

Though Esau tried to enhance the spiritual aspect of this rescue work, in 1973 he took on the "administration of welfare and old age pension cheques for men with various social problems. This service was accepted with great appreciation by various government agencies. . . ." This had the effect of increasing the contact with certain men. Nevertheless, there were brethren who demurred about such involvement. In fact, a committee recommended that either the Conference develop a "rather extensive rehabilitation program," or the Rescue Mission should be terminated. Delegates in 1975 chose to do the latter. By this time the Board of Church Extension saw many opportunities to work with more responsive people such as Hindi, Chinese, and Greek speaking people, and the Rescue Mission, a frustrating task at best, seemed dispensable from a Conference point of view.¹⁴

Ethnic Churches

Remarkably, three ethnic churches have been launched in Vancouver and one in Abbotsford. Not many readers will know that Vancouver had a "Hindu-Mission" as early as 1947-48, when Alvera Neufeld and Ella Fast conducted a Sunday school under the direction of the WCCM. In November 1949, J. Abrahams reported that the outreach among Hindu children was not prospering because "skin-colour played too large a role here." That is to say, white children would not befriend the South Asian children. The work ceased when the leaders were told, "You don't need to come for me anymore. They don't like me over there." For the time being, the Asian children who continued were transferred to the Mitchell Island Sunday School.

The "better way" promised in 1949 was not found until much later, in fact twenty-five years later. With the help of J. J. Dick, a former missionary to India, the burden for South Asians on the West Coast took concrete form in 1972 when Santosh Raj was found to reach out to his own people. Santosh was born in Madhya Pradesh to Christian parents but chose to become Hindu. He was then converted in the Evangelical church of India and eventually came to Vancouver. In 1974-75, when his wife, Mayahal, was able to join him, Santosh was given space in the Fraserview Church to conduct Sunday services for South Asians. The Hindi-Punjabi Gospel Chapel (Extension Church) in 1982 had twenty-one members.¹⁵

Since 1980, David and Stella Manuel have been working among the Sikhs in the Abbotsford area, where the South Abbotsford Church provided a facility similar to that in Fraserview. Though this ministry is promising, many negative attitudes have been built up against these aggressive Punjabi-speaking people who seem to have taken over the



Hindi-Punjabi group, Vancouver and South Abbotsford (1980s). Santosh Raj, pastor of Fraserview-based group, and these mostly turbaned Sikhs.

berry farms in the Fraser Valley. Gerald Janzen, who went from MBBS to the Institut Biblique Laval to teach, was incensed that many members of MCC in late 1977 "voted against a motion that was in favour of dealing redemptively with East Indians." Shades of 1949? Janzen declared: "A people who forget the oppression that they have been delivered from [in Russia] are like the forgiven debtor who refused to forgive the one who was his debtor."¹⁶

As more and more Chinese found an open door in the Pacific Grace Mission Sunday School — by 1977 they made up 80 percent of the attenders — the Chapel organized a Chinese church. Rosie Wong and Paul and Greti Li were appointed first in 1971. When Paul Li became ill in 1974 and died shortly thereafter, Eddy Chu, an evangelical from Hong Kong who had studied at Regent College, Vancouver,



Vancouver Chinese M.B. group pastors (1980s). Stephen Chan, Eddy Chu, and David Poon.

became the new pastor of this group. Because the Chinese predominated in that community, this congregation was able to emerge and assume responsibility for evangelizing its own community. The Pacific Grace Chapel turned over its assets and building to the Chinese church. Interestingly enough, the two Chinese groups at Pacific Grace, one Canadian and English speaking and the other Chinese speaking, did not necessarily mix. They had their own "Kanadier-Chinese" problems. Meanwhile, David Poon began a new

Chinese church in conjunction with Richmond Bethel. As time went on, the two groups separated and each became independent financially. In 1982 Pacific Grace Chinese Church had seventy members and Bethel Chinese had sixty-three.

A third ethnic group developed a witness under George and Leona Anastasiades whom we met at Dawson Creek. These were the Greek-speaking people. Vancouver had an estimated five thousand Greek speakers without a gospel witness. The growth and development of this group was quite rapid. Initiated by Anastasiades in 1976, it turned to Culloden Church for a home base and was listed as an extension church with fourteen members in 1982.¹⁷

New Valley Churches

The Brookwood Sunday School, an extension of the East Aldergrove Church, started perhaps as early as 1949. Some of the workers were Calvin Buehler, Dave Esau, and Arnold Peters. A chapel was dedicated in 1963 and a church chartered in the next year, with George Warkentin from Aldergrove as the first pastor. Warkentin was ordained there in 1968 before he went to MBBS and then to Lendrum in 1970. So rapidly did this church grow under Herb Kopp and Paul Fast that by 1982 there were 174 members. No doubt this can be explained by the fact that Langley lies very close to Surrey, which is part of Greater Vancouver area. Langley has its own attractions but it has become inexorably another bedroom suburb for Vancouver.

An even more unusually rapid development came at Sardis, where about eighteen families in 1975 indicated a desire to form a new congregation. Under the interim leadership of Nick Dyck, they formed the Sardis Community Church, meeting in the Sardis Elementary School. With the help of the Board of Church Extension at first, then under the leadership of Harold Penner, followed by Arlee Johnson, this group had a new functional facility by 1980 and was self-supporting by 1981. There were 142 members in 1982.¹⁸

Coastal Churches

As we leave Vancouver and the Lower Fraser Valley, we take note of one coastal church at Squamish, two others to the north in the tourist towns of Whistler and Pemberton, and two churches on Vancouver Island, in Saanich and Nanaimo. Nick Dyck, as director and sometimes church planter, mentioned Squamish as a possibility in 1974, though he appeared to be cautious at the absence of a Mennonite Brethren nucleus. By 1980 there were six families, mainly of Baptist background, who were interested in aligning themselves under the Board of Church Extension, and Dyck agreed to meet with them. When a lot became available in Valleycliffe, a community of about three thousand a few miles from Squamish, John and Eva Esau went there as church planters. The Esaus were followed shortly by Sam and Dora Penner. Penner told the author in 1982 that until three years earlier he was still planning to be a dairy farmer for the rest of his days. But God called him from the milking machines to take up this work and in June 1982 he was ready to dedicate a new building of block construction and to shepherd a young congregation.

Farther north on Highway 99 lies Whistler, a ski resort town lying adjacent to Garibaldi National Park. A community

church was formed here under Ray and Kathy Wiens in 1981 as a daughter church of Willingdon. Even farther north, at the end of the road, so to speak, lies Pemberton. Art Martens became the pastor of Pemberton Christian Fellowship in 1983.¹⁹

Vancouver Island

Vancouver Island for many years had only one Mennonite Brethren church, at Black Creek, founded in 1935. Though appearances are deceiving, there were no discernible Mennonite Brethren nuclei in any location, as though the Island were too far from what sociologists call "the ethnic mass." Nevertheless, Braun and Dyck investigated the area of Saanich, north of Victoria, in 1967, and the Board of Church Extension decided to move there at the earliest opportunity.

John and Evelyn Baerg were the first church planters in Saanich, a city of about sixty thousand. When George and Carol Braun moved there, George took with him the office of executive secretary. As he became more involved in the Saanich group in a team ministry with Baerg, who was closely associated with Campus Crusade, Braun decided to devote his whole time to church planting, especially once the Baergs left for Ontario.

The succeeding ministry of Paul and Anne Unger, beginning in 1979, has drawn the college and career group. For them the church purchased on Falmouth Road in 1975 is not in the best location, nor perhaps the best facility. In spite of a fairly high turnover, however, the congregation had grown to forty members in 1982. The discovery that there are in fact many Mennonite Brethren families in various of Victoria's Baptist churches indicates that a work might have been started there long ago.²⁰

Nanaimo had a population of between fifty and sixty thousand by 1979. It was estimated that only about twelve hundred attended evangelical churches. In that year, some families formed a Bible study group and indicated they would support Mennonite Brethren church planting. The man found for this frontier situation was Frank Durksen, who had already pastored a church in Sacramento, California. Apparently he met in 1979 with Nick Dyck, who promised to hold Nanaimo for him until he had seminary studies out of the way.



Nanaimo, Vancouver Island (c. 1982).
Frank Durksen, pastor, Neighbourhood Life Church.

Durksen was prepared to begin at the grass roots, without a Mennonite Brethren nucleus, but he would do it his own way. His strategy was that of the politician. He went first to city hall to meet the mayor. A Rotarian, he also joined the

Chamber of Commerce, and used every possible business connection in order to meet and interest families in his Neighborhood Church concept. As a result of these contacts, he was permitted to conduct services in the facilities of a golf and country club. And in 1982, Durksen made certain everyone in Nanaimo would know about his church when he became chaplain to the notorious annual bathtub races from Nanaimo to Horseshoe Bay.²¹

F. Ontario

New Directions

Though it was still expected in 1960 that a group of believers would advance through three stages to independence, under Jake Neufeld's direction Ontario brethren began to refine a policy of indigenization. The use of teachers and Christian Service personnel as "lay associates," a policy developed in Manitoba in the early 1970s, was considered. This policy of self-reliance was pushed farther in 1977 when the Board of Church Extension was directed to begin a new work only where there was first an "expressed purpose" of starting a Mennonite Brethren church. Such a group would be expected to strive to achieve independence within five years. Though we have dealt with DVBS in general, Ontario's concern for it lingered on into this period, under the vigorous leadership of John Unger and the long experience in childrens' work of John Boldt, formerly of Winkler. But eventually camping took precedence, as in other provinces, and came to absorb time, interests, and money.¹

One of the most persistent advocates of acquiring camp property in the early sixties was B. C. Doell, then a Toronto-based engineer. In order to survey properties, as well as the prevailing philosophies and programs of camping, the Conference appointed a special committee. Harvey Gossen reported in 1967. Having surveyed about ten camping operations and finding that certain programs were most appealing, the committee was still not prepared to recommend purchase of any site. Some degree of camping activity was undertaken year by year at Eden or in rented facilities. Not until the mid seventies did the committee under the leadership of Henry Esau and Gerry Ediger, begin to search seriously for property northward. Nothing seemed suitable until they found Camp Masad, twelve miles northwest of Gravenhurst, in one of the most prestigious tourist areas of Ontario. The cost, however, seemed prohibitive, in the neighborhood of half a million, or \$25,000 for five weeks in the summer.

Should the Conference purchase this prize property at such a price? Having heard a convincing case, the brethren voted yes in 1980 and decided to create an appropriate board of camping ministries to correspond to the enhanced status of camping in the provincial context. Henry Esau was appointed general director. Alfred Friesen and Herman Kroeker became camp pastors. In 1982, the Conference envisioned a full-time director and a corresponding program. The Conference had decided to take the direction suggested by Arnes, Evergreen of Alberta, and many other camps of the 1970s.²

What Is the Biblical Mandate?

Something unique took place in the Ontario Conference in 1979. Just as British Columbia brethren had been asking at various times why they did not have more to show for their effort, so now, because ends and means failed to coincide, Ontario brethren asked why they experienced such "minimal growth"? There was a sense of foreboding. It was felt that more was being forced on the Conference than could be paid for. As the Board of Spiritual and Social Concerns pointed out, there was "confusion and lack of clear direction" created by the fact that "motions of the BOCE seem to run counter" to our information. Hence, Abe Quiring, then at Virgil and chairman of Ontario's BSSC, reported that three brethren had been asked to write "independent papers dealing with priorities of Conference expenditure, based on a careful study of the Word of God." Once these had been studied and correlated, their message boiled down to this:

- 1) We are to seek God first;
- 2) We are to evangelize the lost with a "significant orientation to the poor and oppressed;"
- 3) We are to teach those whom we have evangelized to equip the saints for service, at home, in church, and in Christian schools;
- 4) We are to help those in need.

The summary statement ended with a double-barreled criticism: "Since previous stewardship studies [the newstart guidelines of 1977] have shown that Ontario conference spending does not coincide with these priorities, we make a recommendation to bring the Conference spending in line with these Biblical guidelines." The BSSC therefore brought forward what they called "budget utilization:"

- 1) that we increase the portion of our budget for evangelism;
- 2) that we decrease the portion of our budget for Eden Christian College;
- 3) that we increase our giving for the relief of human need and suffering.

This rather startling recommendation was defeated in favor of one that encouraged "vigorous expansion of efforts in all three areas" of evangelism, relief of human suffering, and Christian education.³

Perhaps too much can be made of this. But in the author's survey of Canadian Mennonite Brethren church planting literature, there is not another statement that equals this emphasis on the poor and oppressed, except perhaps from C. F. Klassen nearly twenty years before that. Klassen found it relatively easy then to call for such assistance because wartime considerations and members of "the household of faith" were involved. In 1979, for one moment in St. Catharines, the scales were tipped so as to balance evangelism and social concern. Unfortunately, nothing more was heard of point 4 in the BSSC resolution nor of point 3 of budget utilization, even though it is relatively easier to give to an agency for relief of the oppressed than it is actually to help the poor and oppressed.

Eliminate the Board of Church Extension?

The discussion about "ends and means" had the effect of applying the "brakes" on home missions and urban strategy. DVBS was to be decentralized, and, in line with the

indigenization strategy of 1977, Henry Petkau advocated "decentralization of the work of church extension." In place of the Board of Church Extension would be a Board of Evangelism supervising an executive secretary. Each established congregation would, as in British Columbia, become "mother" or "sister" to any church such as Spragge or Toronto or Stoney Creek. This move seemed too radical in that form and was rejected in favor of a study commission. A year later, the Conference decided that the Board of Church Extension should be retained as a central agency but grassroots support should be strengthened.⁴

The Older Extension Churches

The questions about "minimal growth" in 1979 had their basis in questions of substance arising from congregations that had their beginnings in the former period. When Herman and Irene Kroeker took the Stoney Creek church in 1967, there were expectations that the congregation should grow and carry itself. Admittedly, there was a considerable indebtedness from the construction of a commodious sanctuary. But an adequate plant was said to have enormous appeal. Kroeker, contrary to the new missiology, rationalized church growth as "gradual," though he was a persistent visitor. Yet he soon realized that his was essentially a commuting congregation and that not much would happen until there was a breakthrough in terms of making community people welcome. When the Kroekers left to take the new Orchard Park church, where he was more successful in terms of numbers baptized, his service of twenty-two years was duly recognized.

Norman Neufeld also stayed six years. He tried home Bible studies with renewed vigor and something entirely different — a course in oil painting that enrolled eighteen. Though membership rose to fifty-seven while the Neufelds were in Stoney Creek, there was a high degree of mobility, except perhaps among the commuters. Also, if not noticed before, the area seemed predominantly Catholic.⁵

Norman and Irene Neufeld were succeeded by Henry and Erika Esau. Esau had come from Brazil to study at MBBS and arrived at Stoney Creek just in time for its twentieth anniversary. He was given the impression by his supervising committee that, as the Alliance church in the area had grown, it was time for the Mennonite Brethren church to register growth from the community also. Esau set out to be



The Mountview Church, April/81.

Stoney Creek with Henry Esau, pastor; Chris Haynes, Devin de Siva Piques, Joanne Gurman, Robert Gurman, Patty Burley, Jack Rogalsky, assistant pastor.

the church planter that was required. He brought many people in, having persuaded them that the church was there for them, not only for the commuting group of Mennonite background. He gave the newcomers things to do in the church.

When they began to respond, their presence also changed the complexion of the congregation. In February 1982, Esau was asked to leave. It seems from one point of view that the long-standing group feared that the church as constituted was changing too rapidly or they were losing control. At a certain business meeting there was a confrontation over such issues and, after that, it seems that Esau, who began so well, became expendable. Be that as it may, just about the time he was released, the Stoney Creek church decided to go independent. In 1983, the veterans Jake and Elsie Bergen whom we have met in British Columbia and northern Manitoba came to give leadership.⁶

Brampton and Yorkdale

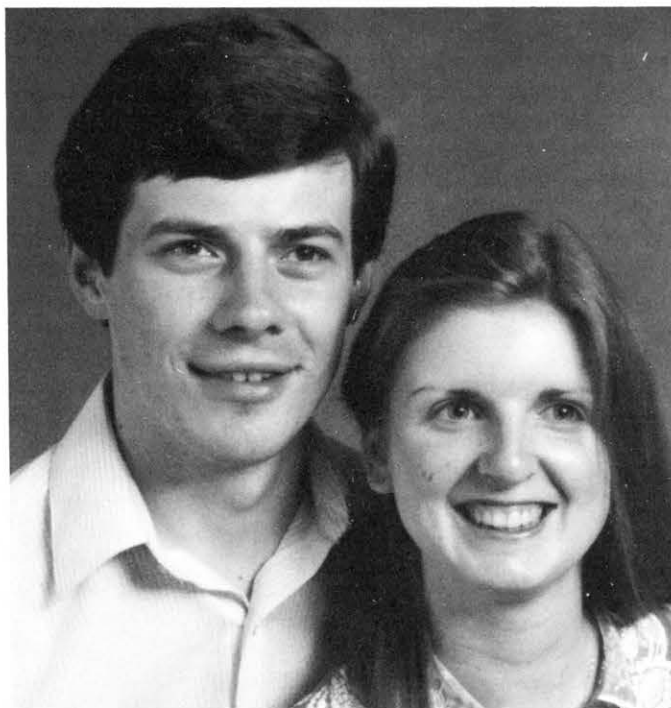
The fact that the Toronto church had become self-supporting did not alter the weekly circumstance of commuting to Rane Avenue. In 1978, certain families requested release from their commitment to Toronto Mennonite Brethren Church so that together with others in the Brampton area they might begin a new church. This was not a new idea. Jake Neufeld, when he settled in Brampton in 1967-68 as field director, had already "cautiously and hopefully" worked together with Toronto to see about "the inception of a new work."

The move to Brampton meant that the congregation that remained, now renamed Yorkdale Community Church,



Ron Friesen, pastor.

would have to ask for a subsidy again. Ron and June Friesen, the pastoral couple, were caught in this separation. And as those in the west left for Brampton, some living to the east began to find new church homes. When the Friesens became discouraged and resigned at the end of 1979, those who remained of the longer-term members, the families of David Warkentin and Peter Langeman, also decided to leave in 1980. Though the work has been carried forward with good results by Peter and Tina Brown from Manitoba as Christian Service workers and then by Alan and Janice Epp, without a nucleus, some questions go begging. Observers close to the events believe the strategic errors in church planting were made long ago. Today there could be a viable Mennonite Brethren church in Metropolitan Toronto if the group had stayed in Willowdale, an area that is "middle class, anglo, suburban, similar to Richmond and Lendrum. . . ."



**Toronto
Allan & Janice Epp (1980).**

Lawrence Heights might have been an outreach point of such a church, but it was probably wrong to make that sort of mission a condition to helping form a city church. Only belatedly, in February 1980, did a group of those living east of Yorkdale meet to consider forming a church in that area.⁷

The Brampton group began on a self-supporting basis under moderator Ed Janzen while they clarified the matter of conference affiliation. The majority were Mennonite Brethren, but there were others as well. K. J. Weinberger became part-time pastor in 1979. When Rudy Dueckman, a deacon from the Toronto church, became moderator, Brampton requested assistance from the Ontario Conference. Under that arrangement, Art Willms from Leamington became pastor in 1981. Two years later, the Brampton church dissolved. As stated at the 1983 Ontario conference, some members did not feel comfortable with the evangelical and evangelistic thrust of the Mennonite Brethren Conference.⁸

Orillia

Another, the oldest congregation to come into the Conference as an outreach point in the 1950s, Hampshire/Orillia, has also had difficulties in the intervening years. Peter and Betty Klassen of Vineland had the longest pastorate there, from 1967 to 1981. The work progressed as three couples were ordained to the deaconate, the Sunday school demanded larger facilities, and the new church, once built, tended to draw in more people. As the twenty-fifth anniversary approached in 1975, Klassen declared that the Orillia church, as it would now be designated, would be entirely self-supporting and debt-free in that year. From that peak in attendance and growth, the church seemed to decline. Klassen resigned, under some duress, in 1981. Plans to expand

the building were set aside, partly as a result of a charismatic group "pressure" that wanted "lively singing and hell-fire preaching in every service." Even more sad is the verifiable circumstance that after all these years, enthusiasm for things Mennonite Brethren or for MCC has sharply declined. Actually, when Philip Hamm, who had succeeded Klassen, declared his intention to resign in 1984, the pulpit committee seriously considered some one outside the denomination. If he had received a 100 percent endorsement, the church would have been bound to ask for a change in affiliation. Though this did not happen, there has been some loss of credibility in the immediate area.⁹

Spragge

Before recounting the remarkable story of St. Anns and other church planting efforts inspired by the aggressive example of Henry Wiebe, attention must be paid to one older work in the north and the work near London, known as Komoko. Spragge, just east of Blind River and north of Manitoulin Island, became the scene of some witness activity in the 1950s. Abe Janzen of United Mennonite background witnessed there alone at first. The work took on more of a Mennonite Brethren identification when John D. Klassen from Port Rowan taught in the Algoma Mines district. When it appeared in 1967 that Elliot Lake would open up many new prospects in the north, the Mission actually considered the area as its newest field. The couple called to serve were Bruno and Helen Toews. Bruno was a graduate of Winkler Bible Institute, MBBC, and Wilfrid Laurier University. When, however, there was a sharp downturn in uranium prospects at Elliot Lake, it was decided to locate at Spragge. As Allan Siebert wrote, Spragge is all that remains of "the time and energy poured into mission work in northern Ontario during the 1960s. Vacation Bible schools were held in several places, initiating Elliot Lake, in an attempt to sound out new areas of pioneering mission work." During Toews's time the group was able to purchase a residence and bunkhouses from the Pronto Mine. These were moved to Spragge and assembled to make a church for Bethesda Fellowship, organized first by Toews.



Spragge, Ontario (1982).
The Archie Jantzen family: Melody, Conrad, Erna, Archie, and Karen.

Willie and Margaret Baerg, returned missionaries from Zaire, served there for two years, 1973-75, helping to organize a church of twenty members. When the Baergs found the cold weather too inhibiting, Archie and Erna Jantzen were called from Thompson where they had led that church for one year, as noted. Jantzen had had a variety of experiences in Christian Service, business, teaching among Hutterites, and in one pastoral position. Also a graduate of WBI and MBBC, Jantzen was ordained at Spragge and has continued to serve there since 1976. Theirs is no easy task as the membership and the community have very diverse backgrounds. Some would even prefer German services. To the north, Elliot Lake is subject to the boom-bust pattern. Nevertheless, the Jantzens have seen to the improvement of the building by placing the whole on a proper foundation in 1981. In 1982 there were thirty members.¹⁰

Komoka

During Rudy Janzen's time as field director, beginning in 1970, search for a church planting site took him into the area west of London. When the Janzens settled in Lambeth they discovered a nucleus for a church. He also became involved parttime as an "Anabaptist-Mennonite" chaplain at the University of Western Ontario. Meanwhile, the Isaak Tiessens had retired in Strathroy where he became a chaplain to a number of nursing homes. Under the pastoral leadership of Janzen and Tiessen, a community church was organized in 1972. Though the church proceeded rapidly towards self-support, Tiessen reported in 1974 that Komoka, as the group was named, had "suffered a severe and very painful setback." Most of the members had left, leaving essentially the Tiessens and the Janzen family.

Several factors touched off this disappointing turn of events. One was the polarity between the educated and those without formal education, and another was the rift between rich and poor. A third factor was embroilment in doctrinal questions such as "eternal security" and evolution/creation. Also, as became apparent, the church had made itself too dependent on one family's wealth. When the head of that family had to be brought under discipline for his lifestyle, the split came quickly.¹¹

Even if one could not say which problem was most



Komoka's first church service in Komoka school, 1971.
Erica & Rudy Janzen, Isaac Tiessen at extreme left.

fundamental, there were in fact many “storms” within the congregation. Over this setback, Tiessen resigned. Janzen, once released from his obligations as field director, succeeded as pastor. Janzen reported in 1975 that the adolescent stage of the church had been surmounted and a mature church had emerged, “sober and at peace in the village of Komoka.”²¹ As a result, the church regained its independence in 1976, but then requested assistance again two years later. Internal problems had to be resolved by the Board of Church Extension and the Board of Spiritual and Social Concerns intervention, and John Letkemann was appointed moderator. After a



Komoka, Ontario (1979).
John Letkemann, moderator, installing Irene and Herman Kroeker as pastoral couple.

year of committee leadership, Herman Kroeker was called as pastor. While some tensions remained, building plans were undertaken and a church was dedicated in December 1980. At the tenth anniversary in November 1981, the work seemed stabilized, though the subsidy remained at about twenty thousand dollars.¹²

Niagara Falls

Interest in Niagara Falls as a church planting site was aroused in 1973 when J. J. Toews did some family life seminars in the Niagara area. The Board of Spiritual and Social Concerns seemed to have a hand in pinpointing Niagara Falls as the next project. By 1975, about eight families had been found to support such an effort. Willie and Margaret Baerg were invited to come from Spragge to the Falls. When they returned to Zaire once more, Alfred Friesen and Jacob Pankratz supplied the pulpit until Dick and Sharon Hill were found as the second pastoral couple. They helped to bring a group of ten families into the Conference and dedicated a church building in October 1979. Henry Wiebe has been serving this group from his home in Vineland since 1981.¹³

Henry Wiebe

Undoubtedly, the most energetic person to take up the direction of mission in Ontario was Henry Wiebe, the son of H. P. Wiebe, the founder of the Bethesda Home and long-time leader of the Vineland Church. Since 1967, Henry has been identified as the leader of the Vineland young people

who went to St. Anns, a small village straight south of Vineland/Campden. John Schmidt, their pastor, and chairman of home missions, stated in 1968 that the work in St. Anns “was a convincing illustration of how mother churches must . . . give birth and produce satellite churches within their working constituencies.”

It all began with DVBS in 1967 when the few remaining United Church people gave the Vineland youth a key to the church. By meeting a need and by making appropriate arrangements with the United Church, Wiebe, assisted by many talented young people released for that purpose, developed a community church. In 1969 the Conference purchased the church from the Presbytery of the United Church for thirty-five hundred dollars. In due course, this



St. Anns Community Church (1982).
This is the church built by Vineland YP, under direction of Henry Wiebe.

was extensively enlarged and improved.

Because Wiebe was a teacher and his supporting group large, the church was always self-supporting. By 1976 it always had more than 200 children in Sunday school and the membership stood at about 125. It was not, however, listed as a Mennonite Brethren church. It has to remain interdenominational for the sake of unity among the nine different denominational backgrounds. Nevertheless, provision was made for Vineland memberships to transfer to St. Anns. When Wiebe left in 1981 to take responsibility for a new



Vineland, Ontario (1976).
Henry and Helen Wiebe, associated with St. Anns and church planting in Ontario.

work in Niagara Falls, he was replaced by Ron Tallman of the Missionary Church, a son of the Tallman family that has provided funeral services for the Vineland Burial Society for many years.¹⁴

Given such success and overlooking the interdenominational direction taken at St. Anns, Henry Wiebe was asked to devote himself to Ontario's church planting, beginning in 1978, at first on a part-time basis. As the reader will recall, this was the year following the placing of newstart and indigenization guidelines into place and one year before the Board of Spiritual and Social Concern put on the brakes in order to bring ends and means together. In line with this, Wiebe tried to find areas for planting churches that might be taken over, not by the Board of Church Extension necessarily, but by a mothering congregation. For example, Fairview could help Niagara Falls, Vineland could help Saltfleet on the escarpment, and Kitchener could help Yorkdale. It was hoped that the mother church could pay the planter's salary and thus help the daughter church to become self-supporting within four years.

After three years of trying to match up mother and daughter situations, Wiebe gave the Conference a review in 1981. He recalled that in the 1950s emphasis had been placed on evangelism within congregations; in the 1960s it was on mission Sunday schools; the 1970s had seen a lingering interest in DVBS; but the 1980s, he stated, was the "Decade of the Adults." The urban areas were now the "frontier of evangelical concern and mission" and this is where the entire thrust should be placed. Having looked at Toronto 25 years following that first opportunity of 1957, he now advocated a systematic, planned, strategic attack on Toronto's three million. "One of my dreams is that we in the 1980s begin several new congregations in Toronto. What a tragedy if we let money or glass, steel or mortar, hinder our winning these lost for Christ."

In spite of this tilt at Toronto, Wiebe was essentially discouraged. Ontario's overall membership had declined by twenty in 1981 over 1980. Institutions such as Eden Christian College and Camp Masad (renamed Crossroads) would in fact drain away too much money from the first priority of the Conference.¹⁵

Actually, Wiebe need not be discouraged if the mothering policy is taken up seriously. The idea of mothering churches is not new to Ontario. We have had occasion to point to Scott Street Church's assistance to Fairview in 1964 and to Grantham in 1973. Port Rowan helped to launch a church in 1974 near Simcoe. The Evergreen Heights Christian Fellowship, led by Herman Plett, was receiving a low subsidy four years later. In 1980 it was Fairview's turn to help another church known as Fairview-Louth Mennonite Brethren Community Church.¹⁶

G. Alberta

Coordination

In an earlier discussion of concerns common to outreach in the brotherhood, we used Alberta's "Cornwall Constitution" as an example of the plateau of understanding in the matter of incorporation reached by 1962. It corresponded very closely to Willems' constitution in Saskatchewan, and to the Manitoba position at the time. Alberta brethren tried to

streamline their home mission by bringing all outreach together under one committee. Edmonton and Calgary then came under the authority of a new missions committee. This committee brought forward a "coordination project" whereby two Bible school teachers might be employed during the summer to give leadership to the camping program, to DVBS, and to field direction for church planting in Pincher Creek and Lethbridge.

Further streamlining was to take place by making congregations more responsible. John Dyck took them to task in 1965 for evading their responsibilities; he berated them for "the sin of silence," or not doing anything. In DVBS many had become content to let a salaried person do the work while the congregation passed the burden to the committee, which passed it to the field director. He called for congregations to turn their priorities around and cooperate with a field man for "an aggressive missionary outreach" in Alberta.¹

In connection with a new look in Medicine Hat, the committee set forward guidelines "for the construction of mission churches in Alberta." Actually, there was not much advance over 1962 policies here, nor in the "Governing Policies of the M.B. Mission of Alberta" of 1971. Only in 1979 did the Conference organize structurally in a manner reminiscent of Manitoba nearly ten years earlier. This more bureaucratic structure had four commissions: Faith and Life, the Church Extension Commission, Christian Education, and Special Ministries. It was now up to the Church Extension Commission to plant churches without taking them through the tortuous path of mission status. Camping, "the Mailbox," and DVBS would be the responsibility of Special Ministries.

This restructuring generated much enthusiasm. Led by Marvin Schmidt of Edmonton, it envisioned eight churches in the eighties. Both Highland in Calgary and Lendrum in Edmonton should sponsor new churches, and the Church Extension Commission would look into Red Deer, Grande Prairie, Cold Lake, Canmore, Hinton, and others. The *Mennonite Brethren Herald* captured Alberta's new mood and called it "the promised land." In 1980 the province had obviously benefited, as well as the churches, from the movement of people, business, and money to Alberta. Who could foresee that in 1982 there would be a great exodus of many of these newcomers? But certainly old style home missions seemed like a thing of the past.

Unfortunately, in the midst of this rejuvenation, one legacy of Coaldale, as the long-time provincial Conference metropole, was "a history of unhappy divisions" in Calgary, Edmonton, and Lethbridge.²

Coaldale

One of the most remarkable things about Coaldale is the collection of voices from the past in the home of George J. Siemens. For about twenty-five years, he has been taping the addresses given by Coaldale's leaders and their guest speakers. Even a cursory glance over his elaborate inventories reads like a veritable "who's who" of Mennonite Brethren leadership, especially in Alberta. The voices of David Pankratz, B. B. Janz, J. A. Toews and his father, Aaron, Bernard Sawatsky, D. B. Wiens, and many others are collected there.

Coaldale achieved an ascendancy in the NDC out of all



Coaldale M.B. building, 1952.

proportion to its size and location. In Alberta, as Rudy Heidebrecht has pointed out, it could outvote with its six hundred members all other Alberta congregations put together, and probably often did. Not much has been written about the impact of this leadership, the influence of its offspring and of its graduates from the Bible and high school. In Lendrum we have seen one side, the reaction to ethical legalism. And if there was a legalistic streak in Coaldale leaders, nevertheless, their overall contribution to solidity, unity, discipleship, and Anabaptism have been so monumental as to transcend the relative pettiness that became irksome to Coaldale's offshoots. Sometimes the crises came within the church itself. One of these shook up the congregation to the extent that it decided to engage a full-time pastor. The choice fell on David Pankratz. Fortunately, we have biographical sketches of Coaldalers that show the transcendancy of God's grace in the lives of people all too human.³

What happened to Coaldale was part of an inexorable process whereby a country metropole had to give way to the city. Coaldale tried to impose its will and way on Calgary and Edmonton, but the church itself lost some credibility because of its own crises just when some offshoot churches were trying to fend for themselves. Eventually, leadership in the Conference passed to the urban churches, to Lendrum, especially, where the membership after all is made up mostly of former Coaldalers.

Long before this, some in Coaldale took an active lead in outreach and some opposed it, especially if it was too close to home. By 1944-45 there was a local committee interested in mission. In 1952, Nick and Annie Reimer began Sunday school at Crystal Lake School five miles away. We have seen the activities of Henry Nikkel, David Ewert, P. R. Toews, and of Bernard Sawatsky who tried to countermand those who resisted outreach. More germane to the discussion, in 1960 Coaldale contemplated the founding of two mission churches.

In 1965, John Dyck reported that a Mission Chapel in Coaldale where George Dirks was pastor had eighty to ninety people in attendance. Dyck berated the Coaldale church for holding up the organization of this group into a church. It was a promising work, but made up of a majority who would never attend a Mennonite Brethren church. Why would not



Province of Alberta; "Mennonite Settlement" sign at Coaldale.

the mother church allow an "indigenous organization to become functional"? Two years later, the Committee of Reference and Counsel reported that among the "retreats" from outreach was the closing down of the Mission Chapel. A statement like the following does not tell the reader much: "We were in our concern caused to seek God's face in prayer, and also to discuss the situation openly and brotherly, and now we want to leave it all to our precious Heavenly Father." A little farther away, and perhaps therefore safer, was the Sundial School, served by Adolphe Redekopp, where Coaldale paid the out-of-pocket expenses as Redekopp, supported himself as a teacher, and where additional teachers were needed.⁴

Calgary

It is necessary now to look at those churches organized in an earlier period and where support was contingent on an outreach emphasis. Coaldale no more wanted to underwrite the costs of church development in Calgary and Edmonton than Saskatchewan brethren in the 1930s wanted to underwrite the North End in Winnipeg, unless, of course, it could be deemed to be *mission*, or if there was serious outreach, such as to Skid Row. Lendrum was not treated that way even though it came under the Cornwall constitution and was subsidized at three hundred dollars a month in 1963. Because of Lendrum's status, however, some could complain that the leadership in Calgary and Edmonton were so taken up with the burdens of their pastoral ministry that they had very little if any time to devote to their primary duty, which was mission work, beyond the needs of Highland and Lendrum.⁵

Whereas Lendrum never placed much priority on Skid Row work, Calgary in fact took it over, and Abe Rempel and his wife, Catharine, carried it forward for years in spite of the fact that their locale always seemed to be threatened by the demolition hammer. When one hall was demolished to give way to the rebuilding of the Calgary one sees today, the Rempels resigned. Another locale was found and renovated in 1976 at a cost of twenty thousand dollars, only to be demolished three years later. Because the Calgary city fathers were prepared to reimburse, and because the Walter Balzers were found as missionaries, the Alberta Conference carried on.

Just as the Balzers were contemplating the formation of an inner city church, the third demolition crew came along. This disturbance of the rescue mission in 1979 meant in effect the dispersal of the community as Calgary's downtown reconstruction seemed complete. What a contrast between Calgary skyscrapers for the oil barons and Highland's mission downtown! Down in the streets, Walter Balzer was answering his question, "Wherein lies the greatest challenge?" as follows:

I personally must say it is taking time personally to sit down with the person, young or old, gay or straight, and give the Holy Spirit opportunity to speak through us and lead that man and woman, boy or girl, into a relationship with the Creator of the Universe; to place an arm around them, and sometimes weep with them, to love them into the Kingdom of heaven, and then to participate in their growth through the power of God until they come to the place where they reproduce. . . .

How was the question of the rescue mission to be resolved? Either they had to orient themselves to building an "inner city congregation," or they had to redraft the whole into a "socially-oriented rehabilitation program;" or perhaps even persist in the rescue work on the periphery of downtown but with a larger support base in the Alberta Conference. Any one of these options was more than one commission was prepared to undertake, and so the decision was reached to close the Calgary Gospel Light Mission. A final resolution stated,

However, we want to affirm the great impact that the mission has had in the lives of many people. We want to affirm the people who have made the ministry effective. To mention a few . . . we have to include J. A. Froese, [the Thielmanns], Abe Rempel, and Walter Balzer. . . . We want to pay them high respects and in no way want to diminish from their work in this time of transition.⁶

Rosscarrock and Brentwood

Long before pressure was placed on the urban churches to plant new groups, the committee under John Dyck attempted a "new approach" to the problem of starting a work through children. That was in 1966, when he had complained about not having anything permanent to show for nearly twenty-five years of work. The approach included saturation evangelism in Rosscarrock in Southwest Calgary through DVBS, Sunday school, and house visitation, to be followed by home Bible studies. "If there is no response after a year or so, we should move on." At the same time he hoped Rosscarrock would grow under the leadership of Dave Esau, who was also supervising the downtown work. Dyck found, however, that those charged with this dual responsibility were only staying for a short span. Rosscarrock, which looked promising, was in fact dropped in the early 1970s even though the Abe Rempels also tried to serve there as well as downtown.⁷

Again, long before the new policy of daughtering churches, a small group from Highland formed a mission group in Brentwood. It all began with a Sunday school, and it was Dyck's own attempt to come to terms with his principles.

Instead of sitting on all their accumulated knowledge, Dyck stated in his forthright way, they had decided on a "projects approach." The group was resolved to apply their faith out in "the arena of everyday life in an attempt to communicate Christianity to our neighbours." Instead of having a pastor they were going to do every-member evangelism in truth.

This, however, led to an impasse with the Highland church because the new approach implied criticism. They had tried to impose "a minority project on a majority . . . whose cultural orientation lacks the preparedness." Though there was a fortunate reconciliation between minority and majority, when it came right down to it, there were not that many people willing to make the switch, and Brentwood was left with too small a group to be successful. Eventually, in a sense, Highland caught up with the enthusiasm of Brentwood, and part of the tension was resolved when, years later, a new church was formed known as South Calgary Mennonite Brethren Church, though it was by no means exactly the same group.⁸

Lendrum

In Lendrum, the membership grew rapidly as a result of urbanization and the influx of students who were made to feel welcome there. Lendrum had early established some priorities of its own. It intended to be a twentieth century church that would close the gap between tradition and modernity; also, it intended to be an urban Christian community church; and further, it hoped to be reasonable rather than intellectual. Above all, it wanted to search for honesty and consistency with the help of the Scriptures.



Lendrum, Edmonton (c. 1971).
The George Warkentin family, with Glenn, Jennifer, and Mark.

About 1972, these guidelines caused problems for George Warkentin who was called as pastor. As we have noticed, he came originally from East Aldergrove Church and had served at Brookwood before going off to MBBS for

further studies. His approach, it was soon discovered, was more conservative and fundamentalistic than the Edmonton group had been led to expect. Warkentin, and those who formed around him, considered that the openness philosophy adopted at Lendrum had led to "insufficient restraints" placed on members in terms of lifestyle. They did not consider Rempel to have been evangelistic enough, and, unfortunately, about that time some young people had experienced problems for which the church was being held responsible, whether rightly so or not. In any case, a split developed, and many young people tended to rebel against the stricter regime. Another reason for the split was the charismatic leaning in the new pastor. Though this may have accelerated the split, not all those who favored charismatica necessarily followed the new leader.⁹

Though serious differences developed, the provincial Committee of Reference and Counsel reported in 1973 that there had been an "honest search for God's will and a desire to understand one another." There was a "spirit of repentance and reconciliation" in the matter. Lendrum's sponsorship of a new congregation, on the assumption that there was room for two churches that might in fact have differing views on some questions, was approved, and the Christian Fellowship of Edmonton came into being under the leadership of Jake Isaac, a 1953 graduate of MBBC.

Unfortunately, the Fellowship did not last. Walter Epp was called from Medicine Hat in 1973, but left after three years even though he seemed to have good success in making contacts through a dial-a-meditation project. Though John Martens was called to serve in 1977, the Committee of Reference and Counsel reported in the next year that "one of the unpleasant happenings of the past year was the report of the loss of interest and commitment in the Christian Fellowship Church, Edmonton." One of those who was present at the time of the split, Ken Epp, took exception to the negativism of the report of the dissolution. He admitted that the group had been charismatic and that they had wished Lendrum would become so, but he insisted that all that had transpired in the Fellowship had been done "decently and in order."¹⁰



Millwoods, Edmonton (1981). Marvin Schmidt, co-pastor, with baptismal group; Schmidt is church planter at Red Deer (1984).

Perhaps having learned what to do, Lendrum now took the initiative in daughtering a second church in the southeast corner of Edmonton, known as Millwoods. The co-pastors were Marvin Schmidt and Dwayne Barkman. The

first was self-employed as manager of a Christian bookstore, and the second was remunerated part time. It was felt that the large numbers of people moving to Edmonton should have a choice. Besides, space was already a factor at Lendrum; it was better to spread the witness around because it had come to be recognized that community churches are not built by commuting members.¹¹

Tofield Gospel Church

Though Calgary has had difficulty transplanting itself except by way of what is known as the mega-church model, a small rural church near Tofield, having about 110 members in 1971, asked the Conference for some assistance to start an outreach. This was given, and Henry H. Epp and then John M. Schmidt came to serve under the new system. The church developed a Christian bookstore in 1972, but the biggest changes don't seem to have come until after Schmidt came in 1976. A new church was built near town and renamed Tofield Gospel Church. Its outreach was to the people of Tofield and to those living on acreages between Tofield and Edmonton, eighty kilometers to the west.

According to Dick Thiessen, who has been intimately involved in the change, the members have been searching for spiritual power through humility and acceptance of people as they are. Some have been charismatics, but the majority have not. The key to the change, not necessarily growth in numbers, has been the farming out of spiritual responsibility. There are numerous sub-pastoral groups engaged in a caring ministry.

In 1983, Tofield completed another building program costing \$750,000. As to the name change, this was brought about in part, no doubt, because of the identity crisis of 1977. Schmidt had argued as early as 1971 that it was unbiblical to be named after the founder. When the daughter of an earlier Tofield leader objected to the implication that the church had not reached out under a previous regime, Schmidt explained that his criticisms were not intended to be a "putdown" of former leaders.

However, the majority of the community got the image of a closed German religious group, trying desperately to hang onto their language, culture and traditions, and that intruders were not really welcome. The main purpose of our announcement [about the name change] was to clarify our position and let the community know that we really want them. Response from the community has already proven this to be a step in the right direction.¹²

Pincher Creek

The story of Pincher Creek resembles the Saskatchewan situation in many ways. It was, however, never a preacherless church, because from 1947 it has had the services of David Durksen, an ordained minister. He served the church in affiliation with the Coaldale church. Pincher Creek's first church, built in the country in 1948, was moved to town in November 1968. Meanwhile, there was a professed desire in 1962 to follow up more persistently all the childrens' work that had been done over the years. A year later, however, Dyck, never shy, stated, "Our proposed plan for capitalizing on years of diligent work at Pincher Creek did not receive sufficient support in our Conference



Pincher Creek, Alberta (1968).
David Durksen, long-time self-employed pastor, welcoming George Reimer, new pastor.

membership to merit further activity there."²¹ He claimed that many young people were disheartened that the Conference would not follow through. At the same time, the Mormons were said to have had "astonishing success." Eventually, in 1968-69, both the Conference and Pincher Creek seemed ready for the "cultural integration" which had been anticipated as very difficult.

George and Elma Reimer were called from Blaine Lake as the first full-time church planters. Though George was actually on half-salary for some time, the church grew rapidly, there were many baptisms, and Pincher Creek seemed to be working toward self-support. Victor and Katie Nickel came in 1976, built a new church, and stayed until 1981. The problems and tensions of 1978-79 were resolved with the help of a sympathetic Committee of Reference and Counsel.



Henry Nikkel, longtime leader in home missions, Alberta, here (1960s), seen at Lethbridge. Today he is pastor at Pincher Creek.

When Henry and Katharine Nikkel moved from Lethbridge in 1982, the church was well-nigh self-sustaining.¹³

Lethbridge

As we have seen, Lethbridge already figured prominently in Dyck's "coordination project." He was able to place Allen Guenther, a Coaldale Bible School teacher, in Lethbridge to bring together those who wished to form a church. There



Lethbridge, Alberta (c. 1963).
Lakeview M.B. church planter, Allen Guenther. Later he served the Toronto church.

were thirty-three members in the mission organized in early 1963. The purpose, as stated, was to organize a church for a strong evangelical witness in Lethbridge. By 1964, Guenther had visited sixty of about one hundred known families in the city. By the following year, Lethbridge's Lakeview Mennonite Brethren Church stood virtually independent.

During Henry Unrau's tenure as pastor, a potential split developed. Instead of dividing amicably, Lakeview protested at the 1979 conference that it was premature to recognize the new group that had emerged, and to whom Unrau seemed sympathetic. The motion to recognize the Community Fellowship was tabled until the Committee of Reference and Counsel had an opportunity to sort out the problems that remained. This was actually done while the conference was still in session, and the new church was approved.

One explanation of what happened parallels the situation that developed in Stoney Creek. Unrau, who had long served as an evangelist with Briercrest, was simply too dynamic for the more traditional-minded in the Lakeview congregation. Unrau began to bring in new members and to give them responsible positions too quickly for some. When the majority turned against him, he resigned, but stayed on to help the minority form the Lethbridge Community Church. The new body of about eighty members then called Ted and Pat Klassen. No sooner had Klassen built one church than an arsonist destroyed it. His next project was a mega one, involving about \$1,200,000. His slogan seems to be, "We can't think small if we are thinking evangelism."¹⁴

Meanwhile, Henry Nickel, whom we have seen in these pages since the late forties, brought leadership to the Lakeview church as Unrau went to British Columbia to assist Nick Dyck in extension work in that province. In 1981, Lakeview called Ralph and Linda Klassen. Though both Ralph and Ted attended MBBS, their ministry styles are quite different.



Lethbridge, Alberta (1982).
Ralph Klassen, pastor, Lakeview M.B. church. Earlier he served at Mile 108.

Ralph hails from Herbert, likes small towns, does carpentry, and seems to suit the Lakeview church admirably. Ted, described as a “big, boisterous former football player and high-school teacher from Vancouver,” likes the big church approach and is not daunted by the fact that Lethbridge has only about thirty thousand people.¹⁵

Medicine Hat

This city in the ranching country of southeastern Alberta seemed another logical choice for church planting activity. William Thiessen, who served as field man for a short time, reported in 1965 that the prospects were good in Medicine Hat. While growth was slow, some families moved from Woodrow, Saskatchewan, in 1965. When Art and Leona Martens came to serve, the group still needed a building, but received support from nine United Mennonite families who moved there. This meant essentially that the three distinct groups were represented: *Russlaender* Mennonite Brethren, American Mennonite Brethren, and United Mennonite families. What was needed was to convince the community that this church could do church planting among their peers.

Medicine Hat's appeal for assistance with a building was heeded, and on February 19, 1969, Martens led in the dedication of Crestwood Mennonite Brethren Church. This did not mean that Crestwood was entirely independent. In fact, it was clearly understood when Walter Epp came as pastor from Dartmouth that the church council was responsible



**Crestwood M.B. church, Medicine Hat (c. 1972).
Walter G. Epp on the right, pastor, with baptismal group.**

to the Mission. Two years later, when the Alberta Conference sessions came to Crestwood, David Rempel, the assistant to the pastor, was serving as host. While it was stated that Epp's contributions at Camp Evergreen had been appreciated, it was clear that something had gone wrong in the interval. The board stated only that Medicine Hat as a church was now “climbing a steep rugged mountain, but was not turning back.” What made them look for a pastor was the fact that Epp had resigned, as in Dartmouth, after about a year. He had gone into sales while serving as pastor half time. What irritated the congregation was his declared anti-pacifist stance in becoming chaplain to the Canadian Forces Base. Also, he organized a Big Brother unit, taught part time, and became very involved in the community. It was from this situation that he went to Edmonton.¹⁶

“The Mailbox”

Before dealing with the planting of new churches in the late seventies, we must look at an unusual holdover from the childrens' movement. This is known as “the Mailbox,” a correspondence course for children that in September 1983 was still enrolling thirteen hundred students. Hilda Heidebrecht began correspondence lessons for her DVBS students in 1955 in order to follow up her contacts. When Heidebrecht went to Colombia in 1961, Margaret Riediger



**The Mailbox, Alberta Conference (c. 1980).
Nettie Berg, with gifts sent by her pupils.**

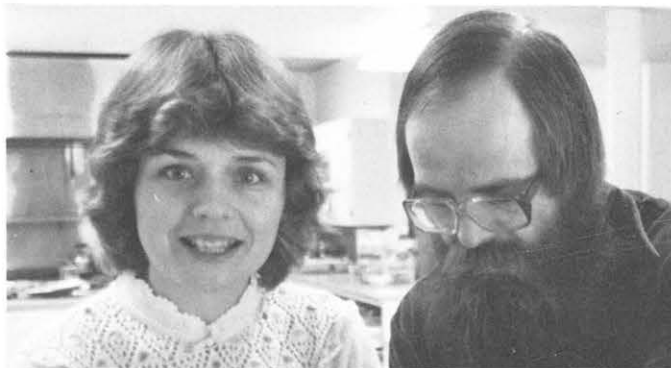
carried on until Nettie Berg returned from service in Zaire in 1971. Berg has developed the Mailbox Club and created a large family of students, teenagers not excluded. Many of her correspondents are referred by her to Alberta pastors, hence there is some coordination with the greater Mennonite Brethren community. In 1980 the Special Ministries Commission disbursed approximately twenty-three thousand dollars for the Mailbox alone, in salary, materials, and employee benefits.¹⁷

Fort McMurray

Aside from the Mennonite Brethren churches already planted in the far north, Fort McMurray represented the first thrust into a new city created by the oil boom, in this case by the Syncrude development, “a symbol of Alberta's prosperity, expansion, and security.” The prospect of establishing a witness there appeared on the Alberta Conference agenda for the first time in 1968. It was only stated that the David Balzers were doing a “tremendous work of communicating Christ to the community. . . .” A year later, Balzer revealed that he had taken on the position of music director in a United Church, but that he was not having as many opportunities for teaching the Bible as he had hoped. Not wanting, as he stated, to promote a system “which was *not* meeting the spiritual needs of men,” nor to be part of promoting what he thought was “confusion and false security in men. . . .,” he resigned from that position.

In spite of the “boom” conditions that prevailed for some time, nothing more was done until about 1974. Those whose names began to appear represented a veritable second generation of workers: Tim Geddert, Roland Balzer, and Ken

Boschmann. The glowing reports of what these students were doing encouraged the Conference to think in terms of church planting. Roland and Maryanne Balzer were first placed there in 1974. They formed the Community Christian Fellowship and opened a storefront called "Crossroads." By 1976, a core of seven families joined by students for the summer had their first baptism. Though the Fellowship was prepared to recommend withdrawal because of the business downturn, many of the members were quite ready to carry on. Under Tim and Bertha Geddert, appointed in 1978, the work grew and, instead of disappearing in the ranks of the evangelicals, a church was formed with twelve members in December 1978. Eventually they began to use the Seventh Day Adventist church, even as they worked toward self-support.



Fort McMurray, Alberta (1982).
Bertha and Tim Geddert, pastoral couple at pastors' retreat, Camp Evergreen.

Geddert clearly showed his disposition to promote a more rigorous Anabaptist point of view than most Mennonite Brethren in his article in the *Mennonite Brethren Herald*, entitled "Affluence and Lifestyle." It ran counter to many assumptions. One brother went so far as to suggest that Geddert would take all Mennonite Brethren on "a poverty trip" that would be the end of church planting. Geddert's view also ran counter to the "get rich quick" image that Fort McMurray exuded. Even Elmer Thiessen in his column compared Fort McMurray to "Babylon" in the book of Revelation. He seemed to assume that it would be difficult for "saints" to survive. Ken Boschmann in his rebuttal invited Thiessen on his next trip to take time to visit the Mennonite Brethren congregation.

The Gedderts were replaced by Dennis and Peggy Voth. He is an MBBS graduate and represents a third generation of workers as the grandson of Henry S. Voth and therefore the great-grandson of Heinrich Voth, the progenitor of this history.¹⁸

New Churches

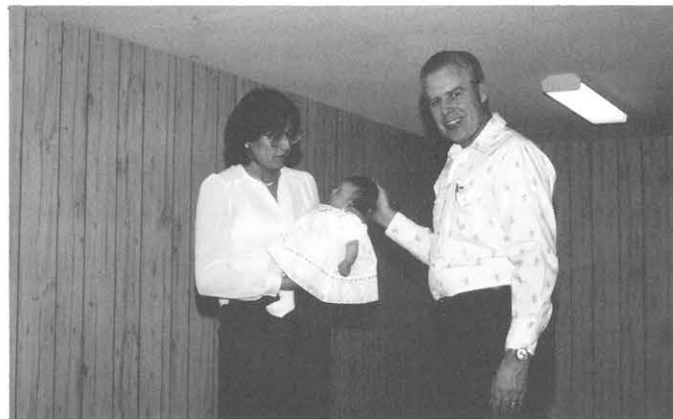
Among new churches to be planted in the late seventies, Brooks became prominent. A number of families moved to this town on the highway between Calgary and Medicine Hat in 1977 and requested assistance from the Church Extension Commission. John Wiebe, the agronomist from Vineland who appears in these pages, was at first providing leadership as he had already done at many Conference levels. The first

worker called was Sylvester Dirks, whom we have seen in the Fraser Valley during the war years. He had returned from missionary service in Latin America. Assisted financially by the Church Extension Commission, the group held a founding service on June 7, 1981 with thirteen members. Another new church founded as late as September 25, 1983 is located in Red Deer, the growing city halfway between Calgary and Edmonton. Marvin and Eunice Schmidt came from Edmonton to be a part of this group.¹⁹

Hobbema

Most cases of contacts involving native Canadians touched on in this account have been ephemeral for a variety of reasons. In Port Edward a decision was reached to withdraw when a rational, anthropology-based theology was given for doing so. At various times, Mennonite Brethren have either supported teachers in Indian schools or supported missionaries working among Indians under evangelical societies. The work in Alberta is of the latter kind. Alberta's mission consists of supporting the Northern Canada Evangelical Mission of Prince Albert, founded in 1956, which has worked on the Louis Bull Indian Reserve for some time.

The missionaries since 1973 have been Reinhold and Helen Fast who were ordained to gospel ministry by Tofield. Until 1978, they worked on the Hobbema Reserve where a church is located. After concentrating on the Erminskin Reserve, in June 1983 they took responsibility for both locations, with the support of about twenty thousand dollars annually from the Alberta Conference. Since 1978, the Fast family has resided in Wetaskiwin, north of Hobbema, and about fifty kilometers south of Edmonton. When Alberta restructured into four commissions, Indian work hardly fit except, perhaps, under "special ministries." Reinhold Fast has described the Hobbema field as a huge mountain:



Hobbema, the Northern Canada Evangelical Mission (1982).
Reinhold Fast with Marlene Morin at baby dedication.

As we view this mountain, from a distance, it seems to defy all human resources to scale its height for the purpose of possession. It has become a stronghold of Satan. Indian religion, witchcraft, false cults, alcohol, drugs, and confusion causing apathy are the resisting elements of this mountain. Yet we do not shrink back in discouragement and despair. . . .²⁰

Only after having invested about one hundred thousand dollars in this work over the years does it appear that the Church Extension Commission seriously reviewed this work with the Fasts and particularly with the Northern Canada Evangelical Mission. While the Church Extension Commission seemed pleased with the progress made under the Northern Canada Evangelical Mission model, the commission stated nevertheless that "since the ministry does not fit into the Policies and Procedure of the Alberta Mennonite Brethren

Conference's Church Extension Commission, more work and study will need to be done to determine how and if we want to continue in Native ministries in the future."³³ There is no indication that consultations have been undertaken with Reuben Block or that the commission has read J. A. Loewen's 1969 paper. From the latter, the British Columbia brethren had concluded that they would not be very successful with work among native Canadians unless they were prepared to work and live with them in their villages.²¹

IX

SOME MEASUREMENTS AND AFTERTHOUGHTS ABOUT THE MISSION CHURCH AND CHURCH PLANTING ERAS

Measurements of Success or Failure

In terms of congregational increase, there has been a measurable and encouraging success during the last two decades. At the beginning of the Mission Church Era, the Canadian Conference had 81 churches; at its end (1960), there was only a slight increase, to 87. But by the end of 1982, there were 147 congregations. Much of that success is attributable to the "new starts" encompassed in the table below entitled "Analysis of Church Newstarts, Withdrawals, Transfers Out and Transfers In." Only those congregations are included that received financial assistance from a conference jurisdiction. The forty-five newstarts before 1960 were offset by closures, transfers to other denominations, and by shifting populations. Most remarkable were the depression-urged migrations, particularly from Saskatchewan, to both east and west. Nevertheless, it must be noted that, taking Manitoba and British Columbia as illustrations, Ashern closed only to be reopened under nondenominational auspices; Lindal was closed and a fabricated archway is all that remains after thirty years of fellowship and blessing; and Winnipegosis was given over to the United Mennonite church in 1969. In British Columbia, Vanderhoof refused current Mennonite Brethren polity and structures and went over to the Associated Gospel Church; Kitimat was given to the Baptists; Oliver to the United Mennonites; and County Line became an independent fellowship.

The seventy-three newstarts in the Church Planting Era have added significantly to the growth in congregations. It is evident that church planting has been much more successful

than the mission church in terms of gains and losses. Church Planting Era churches had a sense of propriety from the beginning and did not feel second class because of constitutional classification, as was the case with Mission churches. The category of "successful continuing churches," as the text makes evident, does not mean there were not difficulties in reaching that goal. Even now some may feel weak or vulnerable, in membership. Some congregations have suffered anxious months because of "splits." To the writer's knowledge, the charismatic movement was implicated in five of nine splits. That is not to say that it was entirely responsible for what happened, but it does suggest that especially where charismatics insist that their experience shall be *normative* for all, the result can lead to division. In the other splits, leadership struggles or/and differences over polity and doctrine were involved.

If the thesis holds up that much of the home mission effort, as it evolved through stages, had its pace forced by the voluntarists, then we must conclude that voluntarism in the Mission Church Era, ingratiating itself into the goodwill and support of the conferences, was not the best way to do home missions. Voluntarism was too much "hit-and-miss." At times, mission was held "at arm's length" not only by the voluntarists for cultural reasons but also because the people in charge at the innermost were not the initiators. Throughout this period, evangelism was directed toward those who were as disadvantaged (relatively speaking) as the initiators. All were convinced that to change a person's ways and thoughts by conversion would lead to a change in work habits and an improvement in life's condition. That cannot be denied. By and large, however, evangelism was

ANALYSIS OF CHURCH NEWSTARTS, WITHDRAWALS, TRANSFERS, AND SUCCESSFUL ONGOING CONGREGATIONS

Legend: MCE = Mission Church = before 1960

CPE = Church Planting Era = after 1960

• = Split because of Charismatic Movement

	Newstarts		Withdrawals or Closures		Splits		Successful Continuing Churches		Transfers out		Transfers in	
	MCE	CPE	MCE	CPE	•		MCE	CPE	MCE	CPE	MCE	CPE
Alberta	2	10	2		1 1		2 8					
British Columbia	16	20	7 1		3 3		5 16		3			2
Manitoba	8	13	5				3 8					
Maritimes		2			1		2					
Ontario	7	11	2 2				7 7					
Quebec		12					11		1			
Saskatchewan	12	5	2 1				9 4		1			
Total	45	73	16 6		5 4		26 56		4 1			2
	Newstarts		Losses				Gains		Transfers out		Transfers in	

Peter Penner, 1984

isolated from the problems that engulf the social worker. The rescue missions approach in Calgary and Vancouver and the work among native Canadians, which require an institutional approach, have not been very successful, statistically speaking.

In terms of membership gains and losses, the story is less encouraging. This is most evident from the many references to disappointment and the failure to gain more members. Worse still, in both eras, losses kept offsetting gains. Taking the 1947 and 1961 Canadian Conference figures so as to include Ontario, the membership in 1947 stood at 8,905 in 80 congregations. At the end of 1960, there were 14,373 in 82 churches. This represented an average increase of 420 in 80 congregations, or five per year per congregation. It is clear that the net gain in membership for the 1970s was 4,108, or about 400 members a year. Gratitude for such numbers is diminished however, by the fact that between 1972 and 1982 about 5,000 members left the church because of excommunications, releases, and transfers to other than Mennonite Brethren churches. If we add to that the fact that Mennonite Brethren have been gaining only slightly more than half of those who have been born into Mennonite Brethren families, it is rather easy to account for the agonizingly slow growth in terms of members. These figures show that during the Church Planting Era the net gains per year have not been increasing in spite of the enlarged number of congregations as units of outreach. Hence, if home missions during the Mission Church Era were declared "feeble," what must we conclude about the Church Planting Era even though a better way of forming congregations has been found?¹

Goal-setting and much hard work on the part of the few has not brought the desired results. Some of the most difficult passages of the New Testament suggest that it will be impossible to save everyone. For example, nearly every house is said to be "divided against itself." That is human nature, which is incorrigible except by the grace of God. But we cannot use the difficult passages as an excuse. The "seed falling on hard ground," for example, does not adequately explain the loss of those born into Mennonite Brethren families. There are after all three elements involved in broadcasting the gospel: the seed of the gospel, the recipient, and also the sower. This book has been about the sower: the home missions worker, the church planter, and the supporting conference institutions. The following sections will suggest some reasons why the anxiety about members is a recurring one.

The Para-Church

Indications are that Mennonite Brethren participation in missionary or evangelistic organizations other than Mennonite Brethren is on the increase. We have pointed out that during the 1930s about 30 percent of all CSSM workers were Mennonite, and most of those were Mennonite Brethren. In the 1940s, it was still frowned on if anyone went to Prairie Bible Institute or Briercrest for Bible studies because this often meant that the graduate was headed for mission under some other organization. During the 1950s, the Conference statistician indicated that about 75 Mennonite Brethren members were serving under other societies. In the 1960s this rose to about 110; in the 1970s to 160; and in the 1980s to 220. At the same time, between 1973 and 1982, an

average of about 70 Mennonite Brethren were serving with the Mennonite Central Committee.

This contrast between evangelistic and service orientations is further heightened when we discover that no Mennonite Brethren is participating actively in Project Ploughshares, an organization working for peace. Yet Mennonite Brethren make up 8.73 percent of all Christian Service Brigade registrations. Fifty-seven Mennonite churches in Canada are involved in Brigades, including 1,860 boys and 729 men. At the same time, fifty-seven Mennonite Brethren churches were joined with Pioneer Clubs, having 2,143 young people enrolled, and 654 adult leaders. While there is only one Mennonite Brethren serving with the Student Christian Movement, there are 15 currently serving with Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship and 22 in Campus Crusade, 17 in Canada, and 5 overseas. Ken Dyck, in his paper on the para-church indicated that about 10 percent of Mennonite Brethren have received some training in lay evangelism in various groups such as Campus Crusade.²



David E. Redekop and family, 1953, when he was Director at Camp Arnes.

One of the best known para-church leaders is David E. Redekop, who has also served in the very recent past as moderator of the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren churches. Since about 1950 he has been a member and leader of the Winnipeg branch of the Christian Business Men's Committee (CBMC). In 1977, he was elected chairman of the ten-nation International committee and traveled around the world in its interest. Appropriately, Redekop was converted in the early camping program of the CSSM. Many Mennonite Brethren businessmen are members of this inter-evangelical group, organized during the depression in Chicago to reach out to the millions of businessmen who are unchurched.³

This one case illustrates just how respectable the para-church has become. Whereas in the 1950s J. A. Toews warned about the dangers of "interdenominationalism" (yesterday's para-church), in the 1980s, the author was urged to include Mennonite Brethren working in the para-church in this study of outreach. Like the subject of DVBS, however, a study of the para-church was too vast or difficult to be included in this study in a meaningful way.

Meanwhile, some grave reservations have been raised against it. Ken Dyck suggested that rather than see Conference monies drain away by supporting Campus Crusade, for example, why not raise the equivalent needed to employ three Campus Crusade workers, train them, and put them to work actively and energetically for church growth on behalf of the Mennonite Brethren church, directly, not indirectly! Harold Jantz, more recently, came back to points made forty years ago. Para-church groups were draining off missionaries and monies. While they possess "a great deal of vitality," they have "less and less focus" that is of value for the Mennonite Brethren church and only increase the tendency to "fragmentation" that is already all too evident.

More grave is the fact that some members of para-church groups pose a danger to the Mennonite Brethren church. Some of their leaders are believed to be implicated in the currently politicized fundamentalist right wing in America. Our history should warn us not to become closely associated with those who mix religion and politics on behalf of some ideology that is foreign to our theology and to the New Testament. That is not the road to successful church growth.⁴

The Long Path to Church Dignity

Having concluded that the Church Planting Era was successful in planting new churches, if not in helping to increase the membership proportionately, it is therefore not superfluous to look at the tortuous path to the dignified status of church. Incorporation was always a problem until the early 1970s. Every effort to force the constitution and polity of the Mennonite Brethren Conferences to yield was turned back. All that could be achieved was the mission church status. For example, the attempt in Manitoba to declare mission churches "Mennonite Brethren churches" ran straight into a legal blockade. Unless the membership in any location was prepared and competent to take up all the responsibilities, as well as the privileges, of a self-supporting church, they remained mission churches, no matter in what light local members saw themselves.

Even though a thorough reevaluation was made in Manitoba after 1962, the only improvement for dependent churches in 1964 was this adaptation: "Those baptized believers are to be considered members of the M.B. Mission, and consequently of the M.B. Conference" and can therefore have the right to represent that group at the conference. Provision was, however, made for such a group, with their pastor, to move into full membership or back into mission status. The two-tiered status remained unchanged. The idea of the face-saving subsidy adjusted to the total need and ability to raise money was not considered for another decade.⁵

Fortunately, the Manitoba commission of 1969-70 also dealt with the matter of money: why should a mission wait to become church until it could afford it? Was that biblical? The brethren recommended "separation of the subsidy element" from the concerns of the missions personnel. "We are [now] convinced the work of missions can never thrive on a levy-type of giving." Home missions boards and workers should do home missions and leave the financing to others. This recommendation was eventually accepted and the Board of Trustees undertook financial responsibility in consultation with the committee.⁶

In British Columbia at about the same time, a most significant change was introduced. George L. Braun declared in 1970 that the word "mission" was to be eliminated because it connoted inferiority, weakness, dependence. People no longer wanted to be the "object of mission," a feeling many had noticed years earlier. British Columbia now did what Manitoba brethren had wanted to do ten years earlier. The statement read,

There appears also to be a fairly widespread idea that the "Home Church" and the "Mission Church" are functioning on different levels and are there for a different purpose. The "Home Church" appears to serve "our" people and is only incidentally reaching into the community trying to win non-Mennonites for Christ. The "Mission Church," on the other hand, is considered to be the missionary arm of the "Home Church," whose function is to reach the unsaved in their community. Perhaps it would help to change this erroneous view of the Church if we would re-name the Home Missions Board and call it the M.B. Board of Church Extension and stop calling those churches who work under the auspices of the Board, "Mission Churches." After all, all churches are to be mission churches, i.e. extending His Kingdom by reaching men and women for Christ. If we accept this premise then the Home Missions Board would be more aptly called the M.B. Board of Church Extension.⁷

Having created the Board of Church Extension, Braun stated at the next conference that the distinction sometimes drawn between supporting and subsidized churches must cease. The former were as responsible for extending themselves in their communities as were the latter. He was encouraged to think that a new vision for evangelism involving



B.C. Executive Secretary, Nick Dyck and his wife and secretary, Betty (1980s).

Nick and Betty have been associated with McConnell Creek, and church planting in B.C., and Nick with the Board of Evangelism.

all churches and laypersons everywhere would soon bear fruit. Some years later it was recognized that 1972 was indeed a watershed for British Columbia. Nick J. Dyck, Braun's successor in 1973, devoted his entire attention to church growth and planting and, by 1976, had a new policy of establishing "self-reliant member churches." This included criteria for choosing a new location, guidelines for initiating such an extension, the presentation of the Confession of Faith, and detailed policies for financial assistance, both for operating and capital costs.⁸

The admissions made by Braun in British Columbia were matched by the Manitoba commission in 1970. They faced up to some rather unpalatable home truths, which went far to explain why mission churches were held in leading strings for so long. Their analysis brought them to conclude that mission churches had been made to feel "second-rate." Moreover, many workers themselves had treated dependent churches as second class to foreign missions or fully independent churches. Far too few workers had had a "definite call" to home missions; too often had home missions "employment" been used as a steppingstone to a further end; and the frequent turnover of workers had left their congregations with numerous questions.⁹

Not only was it necessary to enhance the status of the church to be planted, it was also necessary to give the worker a salary that indicated he was not in a second-rated position. Perhaps the change of heart about salaries was not triggered alone by John H. Redekop's "Personal Opinion" column in the May 28, 1965 edition of the *Mennonite Brethren Herald*, but it must have been a forceful reminder nevertheless. He was embarrassed at "the low salary and allowance which is meted out to most of our home mission workers in Canada," and also by the specious arguments that were used to justify this situation. For example, he once listened to a certain group of professionals and farmers, all of whom were earning between five thousand and twelve thousand dollars at the time, but who could not conceive of paying home mission workers more than two thousand dollars. "After all, . . . aren't these people in mission work?"

Only two years later, whether triggered by this plea for some heart-searching on the subject, the Ontario Conference decided to make the base line \$3,000, allowing for increments of \$180 up to \$4,800. Harold Jantz must have considered these too low when he reviewed the salary question with reference to all pastors, and drew comparisons with home mission workers and between provinces as well. The average of the home mission worker in 1969 was probably about 50 percent of that of the pastoral average. Though British Columbia's salaries were a little higher, the board there waited until 1973 to make a base line of \$8,100, which in five years could rise to \$9,600. By then, of course, inflation made this reckoning obsolete, and by 1982, the baseline in B.C. was about \$20,000, while the secretary's salary had risen to \$24,000 in 1979 and \$28,000 by 1982. In fact, his increasing allowances in addition to salary had created questions as early as 1973.¹⁰

In any case, this was a far cry from the salaries paid in past decades. Here and there we have shown what these were so that the reader would have a feel for the conditions under which people served. *Reiseprediger* were paid the equivalent of a farm hand, plus expenses for travel. WCM workers went "gratis" in the 1930s. Even in 1943, when the

WCM went denominational, the Mission only asked for a baseline of fifty dollars a month and allowances for housing. This was about the equivalent of the *Reiseprediger*. Questionnaire returns (whose results are appended on p. 157) and a search in the Conference yearbooks reveal that salaries paid to home mission workers in the 1940s ranged from zero to one hundred dollars a month; in the 1950s from one hundred to two hundred dollars, with few exceptions above that; and in the 1960s from two hundred to five hundred dollars plus allowances for housing, utilities, and travel. These amounts were the "take-home" pay, as it were.

As the 1960s progressed and the dollar's value in relation to 1941 levels fell sharply, it was well that there was a change of mind with respect to salaries, encouraged by prodding in the press, if not by other means or persons. Salaries climbed so as to range in the 1970s between \$500 and \$1,000 a month, and those coming in as church planters in the 1980s had a starting salary of anywhere from \$1,250 to \$1,800 a month, depending on the province. The Alberta Conference in 1982 drew up a salary schedule for all Conference employees that was designed to remedy the anomalies of the past. It was acknowledged that hardly anyone in the past had fairly considered "the degree of responsibility, level of preparation, or value of service," including the sphere of home missions.¹¹

Ethnicity a Barrier?

Hidden away in the rising tide of acceptance of the new missiology was a strong undertow that had both its good and bad effects. Seen as an ethnicity problem, it helped to clarify the question whether ethnicity is a barrier to church growth. Seen as an identity crisis, it harbored potential problems for the future. The most important debate on ethnicity surfaced first in the 1960s in the pages of the *Canadian Mennonite*. Frank Epp ably articulated how Mennonite Christians became ethnic, and where the ethnic mistake lay:

The original meaning of *Mennonitentum* was *Glaubensgemeinschaft*. The anabaptist movement of the Protestant Reformation which was the cradle of our *Mennonitentum*, was a mighty moving of the spirit, which broke through and transcended, at least for a time, all cultural barriers.

That event was in a sense a historic repeat [sic] of Pentecost and a prophetic anticipation of similar events predicted in biblical literature for the future.

With the passage of time, however, *Mennonitentum* acquired a second meaning, that of *Kulturgemeinschaft* . . . What was a religious movement became an ethnic group. . . .

We have no intention of denying this second meaning, for this is impossible. The meaning of *Mennonitentum* as being a *Kulturgemeinschaft* is a historical, sociological and semantic fact.¹²

The ethnic mistake, however, does not lie in our being Mennonite sociologically and historically. Ethnicity becomes a liability when we elevate our ethnicity into some "tribalism, nationalism and denominationalism" or come to idolize some "particular culture." Taking this as our cue, it

is fair to say that Mennonite pro-Germanism in the mid thirties was a serious "ethnic mistake."¹³

In the 1960s and 1970s, this question was being raised: are our ethnicities avoidable sociological baggage and a hindrance to outreach? Both the elderly and the younger entered the debate. D. D. Duerksen, a senior minister in St. Catharines, stated in early 1963 that to give up our ethnicities, as some were urging, and then discover that "the English" were not coming anyway would be absurd. A much younger man, though of much experience, Rudy Bartel, who grew up in the same area and had contrasting experience at the Niagara Sunday school mission and the Fairview church, on looking back to the beginning of the 1960s, stated that it was *not* theology or ethnicity that raised barriers to success in winning non-Mennonite members. "The real barriers were unfriendliness, indifference, and gaps in performance."¹⁴

A study of Mennonite urbanization in Winnipeg by Jim Friesen and Roy Vogt brought out something of the superiority complex that we have had some cause to suspect, on the one hand, and lack of theological preparedness for urbanization on the other. In 1964, they stated that "the middle class character of city Mennonites, their inner-directed and 'non-worldly' theology and their conservative attitude toward new social situations and to certain widely-accepted forms of city entertainment probably account for much of their difficulty in doing effective work within Winnipeg." According to these researchers, Mennonites had not yet come to grips with the theology of urban Christian life. What was even more revealing was that "the level of prejudice among the Mennonites was greater than among non-Mennonites. The ultimate fear expressed then was intermarriage," and the prevailing feeling was that if Mennonites were essentially superior to others it was better and easier to remain within "the bounds of one's group." These fundamental attitudes were seen by Friesen and Vogt as more significant than the matter of language as a limiting factor in outreach.¹⁵

The Identity Crisis of the 1970s

The most fundamental question to occupy the Mennonite Brethren church in the 1970s focused on identity. In practical terms, this meant that even if Mennonite Brethren were still Anabaptist-Mennonite, should they, nevertheless, for the sake of the dominant emphasis on evangelism, drop the denominational name from the billboards? The question revealed many contradictions across the full spectrum. If traditional Tofield could be transformed into a community church, why would Dartmouth in 1975 want to be called Mennonite Brethren? On the other hand, if Quebecois leaders had come to appreciate the Anabaptism of the sixteenth century, (which has been pointed out), why would the Mennonite Brethren want to be anything else? Or did they really want to be engulfed by a North American evangelical ethnicity that would make them unrecognizable to their forebears?

The seriousness of the matter may be judged from a review of the Ontario scene. Though it is a delicate point, one must ask, how many Ontario extension churches are Mennonite Brethren in orientation, and what does that mean? There was a question about identity at Orillia;

Brampton wanted to be a Mennonite church rather than distinctly Mennonite Brethren; and St. Anns, as pointed out, opted for the nondenominational mode. Was the business of trying to be all kinds of evangelicals to all people, which has been recognized elsewhere, being carried too far? More fundamentally, what was the extent to which Mennonite Brethren had drifted from their moorings in Anabaptism? Was non-resistance and paying heed to the Sermon on the Mount any longer necessary, or was it an embarrassment to the new church planter who wanted to present an image of uncomplicated evangelicalism? If we no longer were anxious about non-resistance, as H. F. Klassen had been, was it for all the wrong reasons? Was it because being for peace sounded like the voice of "secular humanism"? After all, the fundamentalists (the Far Right of the 1960s and the Moral Majority of the 1970s) were now saying that secular humanism was certainly the most sinister device of Satan in a long time!

To illustrate, it was unfortunate for all Mennonites when in the midst of the Vietnam war, the Ontario Conference stated categorically: "We cannot support the activities of individuals or groups who would give encouragement and aid to draft-dodgers from the U.S. who come to Canada in order to evade responsibilities in the U.S. . . ." That statement placed higher priority on another nation's ideology than on the gospel and contradicted the Conference statement of 1966 on the Christian's relation to political life. If such a stand with such an attitude had been taken in 1917-18, it would have closed the door to Canada on the very people who were primarily responsible for making Canadian Mennonite Brethren history possible — the entire Heinrich Voth family!

At least one Toronto member who has since left the Mennonite Brethren church protested against Ontario's stand. No church can both affirm the peace position in its Confession and reject those who pay the price for it. Such inconsistencies can only hurt the church. We cannot be both Anabaptist-Mennonite and right-wing fundamentalist at the same time without occasioning tension and bringing about withdrawals to other churches in two directions.¹⁶

When in 1977 at the Waterloo convention F. C. Peters, Conference moderator and one of the most traveled *Reiseprediger* in Canadian Conference history, suggested that he was prepared to reconsider the use of the label Mennonite as long as we could retain our spiritual heritage, this was not the beginning of a debate, but the reflection of the length to which it had been carried. Though the identity question was debated almost as frequently as the Bible school in the press, it seemed to burst upon the church in the 1970s, especially creating a stir in 1977. Some held John Redekop responsible for a "zealous attempt" in his opinion column to "barter our heritage" by his repeated return to this theme. Yet in 1971 Redekop had seemed to come down to an acceptance of an "evangelical Anabaptism," if indeed *that* label had to be carried along.

That seems to have been the position taken by the Canadian Conference in 1973. That year's debate followed from a discussion of a paper given by J. A. Toews, a strong and consistent champion of an Anabaptist-Mennonite Brethren position until his untimely death in 1979. He had reminded delegates again that "in their origin, as well as in their historical development, Mennonite Brethren had been

guided by their primary identification with Christ and the teaching of the Scripture and by their secondary identification with the 'Anabaptist Vision (a term made popular since 1943 by H. S. Bender). . . . The early Mennonite Brethren rediscovered in the Anabaptist Vision a historical realization of the New Testament ideal of the Believers' Church. . . .' In 1973 the Conference reaffirmed its identification with this spiritual and historical heritage dating from both the sixteenth century and 1860.¹⁷

Unfortunately, there were signs that Toews's position was received with great reluctance, perhaps by a growing number. In response to a slightly earlier paper on the same subject, Toews was attacked openly in the *Mennonite Brethren Herald* for his "clearly pre-1860" position. This was of course an attack also on the founding fathers of 1860. It generated a long discussion and ultimately an apology for the unwarranted attack. Victor Adrian by no means had the last word, but indicated in a letter to the editor that he wished only to be "New Testament" and neither Anabaptist nor Pietist nor Mennonite Brethren. It was clear from the symposium that was called in Fresno for the launching of Toews's *History of the Mennonite Brethren Church* in 1975 and the opening of the Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies that the identity question would be a nagging one for some time. It was, and when it was brought to the conference floor in 1977, there were those who feared that the Mennonite Brethren were prepared to take a road once chosen by the Mennonite Brethren in Christ (now the Missionary Church). They dropped the name Mennonite in 1948.¹⁸

Fortunately, the reaction was fairly sharp. During the succeeding years, more serious consideration has been given to the "Anabaptist Vision." Yet this vision or ideal and reality in the Mennonite Brethren Church sometimes seem entirely disconnected. There is some hope in Ron Sider's call to faithfulness to an evangelical Anabaptist theology, in a new "radical evangelicalism," in a discovery of Anabaptism in mainline churches, and finally, in the chance that Mennonite Brethren pastors will themselves discover the vast riches of an Anabaptist literature, much of it written by scholars who had no Mennonite birthright privileges or insights. The historiography that has been built up since Harold Bender presented his paper "The Anabaptist Vision" in 1943 is phenomenal and ranks with the best in history and theology. Have Mennonite Brethren institutions introduced their students to this literature vital to Mennonite Brethren equilibrium?¹⁹

Assimilation and Evangelism — Some Afterthoughts

As shown, before World War II and well into the Mission Church Era, Mennonite Brethren tended to work mission at "arm's length." For a long time the German language was a cultural factor. But it was not language alone that forced the segregation. We felt socially segregated, as John Dyck of Alberta declared in 1965. We were generally not wealthy enough, not successful enough as farmers and professionals (mostly teachers then), to be acceptable on socio-economic grounds. Nor had our preachers, journalists, and writers made their mark on Canadian society. Perhaps our musicians and choirs proved the exception, though we did not use them effectively as a bridge to others. In a word, we were

not assimilated enough to command attention, to compete for places in Canadian society, even to intermarry with evangelicals. Our research has, however, discovered that "gaps in performance" between *Lehre und Leben* (doctrine and ethics), arrogance, unfriendliness, and cliquishness have been more to blame for our standoffishness than ethnicity or lack of social standing. Moreover, in the Mission Church Era, we were much more deliberately non-conformed to the world.

All that changed in the Church Planting Era. Once we had become wealthier, more successful in scholarship, authorship, politics, the major professions, and small businesses, we naturally adjusted our lifestyles in order to accommodate the world. Sermons on Romans 12:1-2 were heard less frequently. In a word, we joined the "acquisitive and affluent society," perhaps with too much eagerness and thoughtlessness. At the same time, we rationalized or sloughed off those identifiable characteristics of our brotherhood and our Anabaptist heritage that set us apart from mainstream evangelicals-fundamentalists, let alone from the so-called mainline denominations. In any case, we did not want to be held up on our main emphasis, evangelism, by awkward elements in our theology, even though that rationalization would be impossible to justify in a scholarly way.

That this seems to have been the case may be seen from a statistical survey taken of the theological orientation of our workers in both the Mission Church and Church Planting Era. Nearly twice as many of these indicated that they had a distinct Mennonite Brethren and "broadly evangelical" orientation as had an Anabaptist-Mennonite orientation (see p. 157). Either our theological institutions have failed, we were confused and disunited on what our distinctives ought to be, or we were determined to be more or less just another evangelical-fundamentalist branch in North America.

How did this social, religious, and economic adjustment affect church planting? Admittedly, it made it much easier than mission work during the Mission Church Era. Not only were we assimilated socio-economically, but we had assimilated so far to the evangelical mainstream in terms of theological emphasis that our matured outreach in the Church Planting Era was based on confidence. In many quarters we no longer felt inhibited, embarrassed, or apologetic for our former old-world Anabaptist stances. We now ranked with the Baptists, the Alliance, Evangelical Free, Associated Gospel Church, the evangelicals among the Presbyterians, Anglicans, and others. As the author discovered in 1982, Mennonite Brethren memberships were virtually exchangeable commodities with memberships in those denominations. In fact, as early as 1971, one can read the following in a report from the Board of Spiritual and Social Concerns:

During the last five years relatively large numbers of our members have transferred to other denominations [about 180 a year!]. The reasons for this trend are presently under study. If this movement would constitute a two-way street, with Christians from other denominations joining our churches, this phenomenon should not be any cause for serious concern. But apparently it is not [a two-way street]. . . .²⁰

That is to say, already a dozen years ago, a leading

committee was mentally prepared to receive evangelicals from anywhere on a one-for-one basis. This is not surprising when we seem to be more conformed to the North American

way of life than the New Testament would allow, and less non-conformist than our history and heritage would suggest.²¹

THE APPENDIX

ANALYSIS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRES RETURNED IN 1982 FROM HOME MISSION WORKERS AND CHURCH PLANTERS

The following table is the result of a prolonged search for about 150 workers and planters who served between 1935 and 1980. I received about 130 returns, 126 of which

have been calculated into the tabulations given below. This represents a return of 84 percent, good by any standard.

A) <i>Ethnic Culture of Workers and Planters Percentages</i>		
Those ethnically Mennonite		89.8%
Their spouses		76.0
Family size: number of children per couple:		3.2
Names given to children overwhelmingly		
North American		89.8
Birthplace		
	Saskatchewan	30.0
	Russia	22.2
	Manitoba	15.8
	Alberta	12.0
	Ontario	7.1
	British Columbia	6.0
	Quebec	?*
Home Congregation		
	Saskatchewan	31.0
	British Columbia	16.5
	Alberta	11.0
	Manitoba	11.0
	Ontario	10.3
	Quebec	3.9
Mother Tongue		
	Low German	47.6
	High German	32.0
	English	13.5
	French	3.9
B) <i>Educational Background</i>		
Elementary		
	Prairie Provinces	51.0
	British Columbia	16.6
	Ontario	10.0
	Russia	?
Secondary		
	Prairie Provinces	49.2
	British Columbia	20.0
	Ontario	11.0
Bible school and MBBC		
	Mennonite Brethren	
	Bible schools	72.2
	Other Bible schools	22.2
	MBBC graduates	46.8
University		
	Undergraduate degree	52.3
	Graduate Work	
	MBBS	8.7
	B.D.	4.7
	M.A.	14.2
	M.Div.	14.0
	Ph.D. (and equivalent)	3.9
	Education degrees	14.0
	Clinical Training	15.8

*Returns from Quebec are incomplete.

Doctrinal Orientation	
Broadly Evangelical	52.3
Distinctly Mennonite	
Brethren	47.6
Anabaptist Mennonite	29.0
Uncertain	3.0
Charismatic	4.7
C) <i>Service</i>	
Motivation Factors Most Influential	
Early Experience before or during	
Bible school years	60.3
The Bible school	
experience itself	53.9
Home congregations	47.6
The home	38.8
The Stages in Church Development	
Under Which Work Was Done **	
Mission Church status	58.0
Mission Station status	53.0
Church planting approach	37.0
In Self-Supporting stage	32.5
Changed name to Mennonite Brethren	8.7
Changed name to "Community"	15.0
Migration into and out of Home Missions	
To a self-supporting church	34.1
Was home missions a "stepping stone"?	31.7
To a self-supporting but not	
Mennonite Brethren church	7.9
To a para-church organization	5.5
To teaching in conference schools	5.5
From foreign missions	4.7
From a self-supporting church	3.1
To foreign missions	2.3
Into "secular" employment	
Teaching	7.9
Service occupations	5.5
Several went into business and government service	

**The author does not claim accuracy in this category, though the percentages reflect the preoccupation with this question.

Back to school

University	9.3
MBBS	7.1
MBBC	1.5
Other	4.7

Dismissals

4.0

Degree of "Success" ***

Baptisms performed average 16.5 per worker and planter; the range is all the way from 0 to 140; four baptized over 100; if these are removed from the calculation, the average would be much lower.

Those who experienced "revivals" to some degree

19.0

Where charismatic movement was negative in result

28.5

Where charismatic movement was positive

15.0

Workers who had contact with native Canadians

29.0

Provinces in which workers and planters were ordained

British Columbia	28.2
Saskatchewan	22.0
Manitoba	20.2
Ontario	14.0
Alberta	8.7
United States	4.0

Percentage of workers who were ordained

78.5

Salary Scales

Reiseprediger

From \$35 to \$50, the equivalent of a farmhand, or "gratis" "gratis" to equivalent of a *Reiseprediger*

1930s

1940s

1950s

1960s

1970s

1980s

\$0 to \$100 was the range
\$100 to \$200 (Winnipeg paid more)
\$200 to \$500 "take-home" pay per month
\$500 to \$1,000
\$1,250 to \$1,800

Those Who Served 25 Years or More in Home Missions:

Henry G. and Sara Classen	In Vancouver
Arno and Lena Fast	In Saskatchewan and Manitoba
Frank F. and Bertha Froese	In Saskatchewan
Herman and Irene Kroeker	In Ontario
George and Erna Martens	At Grand Forks, BC
John and Martha Reimer	In British Columbia, Ontario, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan
Joe and Marie Wiebe	In Manitoba

*** Some workers asked: why not include *conversion* figures as well as baptisms? According to Mennonite Brethren polity, what counts are church memberships and these come only from adult believers' baptism.

INDEX OF CHURCHES PLANTED AND THEIR PASTORAL COUPLES

Note: The author cannot guarantee complete accuracy in the matter of the stages through which congregations passed. Generally speaking, in the MCE they became eligible for full

membership once they had achieved self-support; in the CPE, quite the reverse was possible and desirable.

General Legend: Beginnings of the work *
 Organization as a mission station **
 Organization as a mission church ***
 Membership in the Conference +

Achievement of self-support ++
Transfer to another denomination -
Withdrawal of support and closure --

Province and Location Workers and Planters Years in Service

MANITOBA

Altona	Michael and Shirley Young	1981- * +	Maples	Arthur and Elsie Kliever	1979-83 *** ++
Ashern	Peter J. and Anne Esau	1945-6 *		Melvin and Linda Freeman	1983-
	Joe and Marie Wiebe	1946-57 **	Portage la Prairie	John and Marie Quiring	1959-65 *** ++
	Ben and Agnes Doerksen	1957-9 --		John B. and Katie Epp	1965-7
Brandon	Abram and Margaret Froese	1954-6 *		Edward R. and Kay	
	Lawrence and Selma			Giesbrecht	1968-71
	Warkentin	1956-60 **		Leadership team	1971-
	Harvey and Agatha Gossen	1960-4 ++ +			1974 --
	Henry and Vi Willms	1965-75	St. Boniface	Dick and Gertrude Neufeld	1981- * +
	Albert and Lorna Baerg	1975-81	Snow Lake Christian Fellowship Centre		
	Harold Krahn	1982-		Ken and Carolee Neufeld	1974-81 * ++
Brooklands	Abe and Annie Quiring	1963-76 *** *		Walter and Mary Balzer	1981-2
	Don and Frances Enns	1977-84 ++		John and Anita Klassen	1982-
Carman	Peter and Helen Martens	1957-9 **	The Pas Neighborhood Life Group		
	Abe and Annie Quiring	1958-63 *** +		James and Elfrieda Nikkel	1970-7 * ++
	George and Louise Block	1963-4		George and Clara Toews	1977-81
	John and Mary Unger	1964-7		Jim and Leona Totzke	1982-84
	John and Gloria Block	1967-73	Thompson	Gary and Joyce Sawatsky	1979- ***
	Peter and Tina Doerksen	1973-83 ++	Winnipeg City Mission		
	Mark and Sharon Johnson	1983-		Johann Warkentin	1907- * +
Cranberry Portage	Gary Sawatsky	1978-9* +		William and Helena	
	John and Maryanne Nikkel	1980-		Bestvater	1913-21 ++
Horndean	Abe and Annie Quiring	1953-9 **		Erdman and Agnes Nikkel	1921-5
	Peter and Helen Martens	1959-62		C. N. and Tina Hiebert	1925-41
	Peter and Eva Loewen	1962-3		William and Helena Falk	1941-52 **
	Ernie and Esther Isaac	1963-4	Gospel Light Mission Church, Logan Ave.		
	Henry and Vi Willms	1964-5 ++		John M. and Mary Schmidt	1952-60 *** ++
	John Froese	1965 +			
	Peter and Helen Martens	1967-73	Salem Church	Rudolph and Louise Willms	1960-6 +
	I.B. Hildebrandt	1973-1983 --		Jacob and Esther Balzer	1966-9
Leaf Rapids	Gilbert and Adeline Berg	1972-9 * +		Arno and Lena Fast	1969-
	Jake and Elsie Bergen	1978-83	Winnipeg Portugese Church		
	Hugo and Connie Reimer	1983-		Linda Banman	1974- *
Lindal	Peter John Esau	1934-5*		Bruno and Aneliese Wiebe	1978- +
	J. P. Braun	1937-43	Winnipeg, Transcona	Ed and Helga Hamm	1984- +
	Jake H. and Marie Kehler	1943-9 **	Winnipeg, Selkirk	Art and Elsie Kliever	1983- +
	Abe and Helen Goerz	1949-52	Winnipeg, Vietnamese and Chinese Church		
	Wilmer and Evangeline			James and Rebecca Duong	1983- +
	Kornelson	1952-5 **	Winnipegosis	DVBS Pioneers	1945 *
	Peter and Justina Penner	1955-7		Abe and Sara Esau	1946
	Frank J. Friesen, Morden	1957-9		John and Helen Froese	1946-50 **
	Joe and Marie Wiebe,			Peter and Helen Martens	1959-5
	Morden	1959-66 --		Harry and Gertrude Loewen	1955-7

Winnipegosis	Frank and Helen Peters	1957-
	Alfred and Viola Friesen	1960-3 ++
	Henry and Vi Willms	1963-4
	John and Gloria Block	1964-7
	Joe and Marie Wiebe	1967-9 --

SASKATCHEWAN

Blaine Lake Gospel Chapel

David B. and Gertrude Wiens	1940s *
Peter and Anne Esau	1955-8 **
Abe H. and Stella Dueck	1959-64
George and Elma Reimer	1964-8 +
Irwin and Mary Penner	1968-72
George and Thelma Dirks	1972-3
Dave and Mary Wootton	1973-8
Bill and Margaret Bolan	1978- ++

Blumenort	Otto and Adelaide Derksen	1948-51 *
	Peter and Irene Tilitsky	1951-2 -

Carrot River Gospel Mission

Victor and Katie Nickel	1957-65 * **
	++

Neil and Laura Funk	1965-8
Reuben Andres, Harland Smith, Ed Wright	

Foam Lake

Conrad and Jean Peters	1976-
Alvin and Irma Penner	1953-6 **
Jake and Marie Kehler	1956-60
Gerhard and Nellie Reimer	1961-6 ***
Peter and Rosalie Willms	1966-8
Frank and Bertha Froese	1968-74 ++
John and Lenora Siemens	1974-9 +
	1979 -- ++

Hague Ferry

Dan and Kathy Stobbe	1982-
Abe B. Voth	1935 *
George Giesbrecht	1937-43
H. G. Rempel	1942-4
Louis and Edna Goertz	1944-7 **
David Niessen	1945
Helena Unruh and Katy Wiebe	1946-50
Theodore and Frieda Martens	1950-1
Jean Fehr and Erna Bartel	1951-2
Victor and Katie Nickel	1952-7 ***
George and Elma Reimer	1957-9
Waldo and Nellie Lepp	1959-60
Jake and Marie Kehler	1960-7
	1968 --

Lanigan Christian Fellowship

Lawrence and Martha Redekopp	1973- ***
	++ +

Lloydminster Colonial Park Fellowship

Eric and Margaret Penner	1978-80 * +
Herbert and Betty Schmidt	1980-
Jake S. and Lena Adrian	1945-52**
Peter and Irene Tilitsky	1950-1
Rudy and Erica Janzen	1952-3
Frank and Bertha Froese	1953-7
Jake and Susie Schellenberg	1957-8
Alvin and Irma Penner	1958-62

Lucky Lake

Lucky Lake	J. J. and Helen Thiessen	1962-7 ***
	John and Evelyn Wiens	1967-9
	Ed and Mary Epp	1969-73
	Ed and Kay Giesbrecht	1973-6 ++
	Ken Sperling	1976-83
	John and Leonore Siemens	1983-

Meadow Lake Gospel Fellowship

Compass	Frank Janzen	1943-50
	David and Rose Nickel	1950-7 ***

Rapid View	Arno and Lena Fast	1957-60
	Alfred Quiring	1960-1
	Archie Jantzen	1961-2

Meadow Lake	William and Agatha Buller	1962-72 ++
	Reuben and Tena Andres	
	Ben and Anne Klassen	1975-7 +
	Gilbert and Adeline Berg	1978-82
	Darrel and Caroline Bargaen	1982-3

Mildred (Northvale)	Abe and Rubina Pauls	1942-52 **
	Menno and Edna Lepp	1952-5
	John and Luella Kehler	1955-61 --

Moose Jaw Regal Heights

Lorlie and Deanna Barkman	1964-75 ***
	++ +

Leo and Hildegard Siemens	1975-81
John and Beatrice Klassen	1981-

North Battleford	Arno and Lena Fast	1960-9 ***
		++

Henry and Clara Janzen	1969-75
Cliff and Wilma Derksen	1975-
John and Gloria Block	1980-

Pierceland

A. A. and Gilda Wiebe	1943- *
John G. and Margaret Willems	1962-6 ***
Albert and Laura Pahlke	1956-8
Waldo and Nellie Lepp	1958-9
George and Elma Reimer	1959-63 ++
Walter and Velma Reimer	1963-7
Adolphe Redekopp	1967-9
Albert and Laura Pahlke	1969- +
Caroll Hill (Newcastle, NB)	1971-4
Isaac Sawatsky	1977-
John Penner	1968-9*
Abe and Alvina Klassen	1969-72
David Niessen	1942- *
George L. and Carol Braun	1953-6 ***
Helmut and Laura Klassen	1956-60 ++
Helen Giesbrecht	1959-61
George B. and Esther Dyck	1960-8 +
Peter and Katie Teigroeb	1968-9
Don Balzer	1970-2
Cliff Jantzen, Assistant	1969-74

Parliament Community

Paul and Anne Unger	1972-9
Norman and Irene Neufeld	1979-

Saskatoon City Mission

Henry S. and Anna Rempel	1935-50*
Helen Giesbrecht	1950-9

West Portal

Abe J. and Leona Sawatsky	1950-6 ***
Lawrence and Martha Redekopp	1956-63 +
	++

West Portal	Mark and Rose Gripp	1963-4	Grand Forks	Peter and Helene	
	Wally and Melita Gripp	1964-7		Schroeder	1947-52*
	Nick and Betty Willems	1967-72		Jacob Reimer (Winlaw)	1940s-
	Corny and Irene Braun	1972	Grand Forks Gospel Chapel	George and Erna Martens	1948-82**
	Abe and Alvina Klassen	1972-			*** ++
Swift Current South Side	G. W. Peters	1932	Harrison Hot Springs	Rey and Ann Nickel	1982-
	Art Martens	1941 *		John R. and Bertha	
	A. H. Wieler	1943-5		Martens	1944-51 **
	George and Annie Koehn	1945-50		Henry Born and Abe Neufeld	1951
	Lawrence and Martha			John and Martha Reimer	1952-7 ***
	Redekopp	1950-6 **		Peter and Betty Boschmann	1957-62
	Alvin and Irma Penner	1956-8		Walter Heinrichs	1962-6
	David and Rose Nickel	1958-9		Jake and Leona Friesen	1966-79 ++
	J. S. and Lena Adrian	1959 - (to AGC)			+
	Eugene and Lydia Martens	1960 *		John and Martha Reimer	1979-
	Ernest and Esther Isaac	1960-3 --	Lake Errock	David Friesen, <i>et al.</i>	1959-61 *
Warman	John B. Guenther	1944-7 **		Art and Edna Isaac	1962-78 ***
	Menno and Edna Lepp	1947-52			++ +
	Norman and Mary Fehr	1952-7 ++		Arnold Wiebe	1978-9
	Frank and Bertha Froese	1957-68		Helmut and Betty Schmidt	1979- *** +
	Elvin Penner	1968-73		Calvin Buehler <i>et al.</i>	1949 *
	Henry Wall	1973-4	Brookwood S. S.	South Langley	
	Ben and Esther Heppner	1974-82		George Warkentin	1963-70 ++
	Dave and Anita Esau	1982-		J. J. Dyck	1968-73 +
				Herb and Doris Kopp	1973-7
				Paul and Betty Fast	1977-
BRITISH COLUMBIA			Mile 108	Harold Penner	1974 *
				Ralph and Linda Klassen	1975-7
Armstrong	Hank Wiebe	1976 *		Tuck Wilson, Merv	
	Jake and Esther Balzer	1977-82 ++		Boschmann	1977
		+		Brent Willson	1977-8
	Don Reimer	1983-	Caribou Christian Life Group		
County Line	Abe and Leona Sawatsky	1948 *		Harold and Margaret	
	John Guenther	1950		Penner	1978-81
	Calvin Buehler	1951-3		Lvall Johnson	
	John and Eva Esau	1953-60**		Robert M. Teel	1982 --
		*** ++	Kamloops Valleyview Bible		
	David Froese	1961-2		Ed Rempel	1970 *
	George and Edith Penner	1962-78 --		Jake and Esther Balzer	1970-7 ++ +
		(to AGC)		John and Anita Klassen	1978-82
Dawson Creek	Jake and Katie Neufeld	1962-4 ***		Reuben and Martha Pauls	1983-
		++	Keremeos Cawston	Christian Fellowship	
	Peter and Betty Klassen	1964		John and Eva Esau	1982- +
	Leo and Hildegard Siemens	1965-73 +	Kitimat	George and Rose Braun	1958-60 **
	Alvin and Irma Penner	1968-73 +		Aaron and Kathren Schmidt	1960-66 ***
	George and Leona				++
	Anastasiadas	1973-6			1967 --
Northgate Community	Chris Wilson	1977-	McConnell Creek	Cornelius Klassen, Matsqui	1947-56 **
	Ray Good, Moderator	1979		Nick J. and Betty Dyck	1957-62 ***
	John E. and Anne Friesen	1978-83 ++	Mountain View Gospel Chapel		
Fort St. John	Irwin and Amanda			Herbert D. and Adeline	
	Klaassen	1959-61*		Neufeld	1962-8 ++ +
North Peace	Peter and Betty			Hartley and Mareta Smith	1968-73
	Boschmann	1962-7 ***		Victor and Helen Stobbe	1973-81
		++	Mission Christian Fellowship		
	John and Erna Schmidt	1967-77 +		Jake and Esther Balzer	1982-
	Jake and Elfrieda		New Covenant Church		
	Thielmann	1978-81		J. and Fran Marsioli	1982- --
	Leo and Hildegard Siemens	1981-	Nanaimo Neighborhood Church		
				Frank and Carolyn Durksen	1981- ++

New Hazelton	John F. Kornelson and George Stobbe	1949 *	Quesnel Westpark Chapel	Richard Andres	1982- +
	George and Rose Braun	1952-58 **	Ruskin Gospel Chapel	A. J. Stobbe, Elmer and Verna Warkentin	1949 **
	George and Rose Braun	1960-78 ***		Peter F. Ewert and Waldo Lepp	1950-52
		+ + +		Aaron and Kathren Schmidt	1954-5 ***
		1978 --			1955-
Ocean Falls Gospel Fellowship	Jake and Mary Geddert	1958-61 ***	Saanich Community Church	John W. and Evelyn Baerg	1968-72 *
		+ +		George L. and Carol Braun	1970-9 + +
	Tom Loewen	1961-4		Paul and Anne Unger	1979- +
	John and Bertha Balzer	1964-7			
	Sam Lewis	1967-8			
	Walter Toews	1969-70			
	Neil Klassen, Team Leader	1966-71			
		1973 --			
Penticton Alliance	Henry Unrau	1982 + +	Sardis Community Church	Nick F. Dyck	1975-6 + +
Transferred				Harold and Margaret Penner	1976-8
Oliver	Henry Unger, Greendale	1949-50 **		Arlee and JoAnn Johnson	1979-
	Jake A. and Justina Froese	1950-3 ***	South Abbotsford	Witness to Sikhs	
	John E. and Leona Klassen	1953-62		David and Stella Manuel	1980- ***
	Peter C. and Agnes Penner	1963-7 + +	South Otter	A. J. Stobbe	1949
	Helmut and Laura Klassen	1967-70 -		John H. Enns	1951- **
Port Coquitlam				George and Tina Konrad	1958-9
Burke Mt.	John and Elfrieda Klassen	1974-7 + +		Jake and Katie Neufeld	1959-62 ***
	Nick J. Dyck	1978		Victor and Helen Stobbe	1962-7 + +
	Henry Unrau	1979		Calvin and Tillie Buehler	1967-71 +
Eagle Ridge Bible	Harry R. and Lorraine Loewen	1980- +		Herman and Katie Voth	1971-5
Port Edward	Harvey Enns	1951-2 *		Dave and Anita Esau	1975-82
	Jake and Elsie Bergen	1952-8		Carl and Debbie Bracewell	1982-
	Henry Thiessen	1958-9	Squamish	John and Eva Esau	1980-1 *
	John P. and Janice Goertz	1959-63 **		Sam and Dora Penner	1981- +
		+ +	Terrace	George B. Peters, Moderator	1952-5 *
	John P. and Erna Schmidt	1964-7		Aaron and Kathren Schmidt	1955-61 ***
	Arnold Falk	1967-8		Jake H. and Leona Friesen	1960-1
	Walter Friesen	1969-71		Norman and Mary Fehr	1961-2
	John R. Dick	1971		Alvin and Irma Penner	1962-8 + +
Harbour of Hope Chapel				John and Bertha Balzer	1968-72
	R.G. Bennett	1972		Jake Martens	1972-3 +
	Menno Friesen	1976-80		Dwayne Barkman	1973-7
	Allen and Anne Marie Davis	1980-		Arnold Peters	1977- --
Prince George	John and Eva Esau	1960-3 ***	Vancouver City Mission	Jacob G. Thiessen	1938- **
		+ +		Henry G. and Sara Classen	1945, 1950-77 *** +
Peden Hill	Helmut and Laura Klassen	1963-7 +		Herbert Brandt, S.S. director	1951-61
Westwood	Neil and Laura Funk	1968-74		Susie Neufeld	1956-
	Henry and Amanda Poetker	1974-5	Rescue Mission	Lloyd McMahon	1961
	Nick and Betty Willems	1976-		Tom Rourke	1963
Queensborough Mission				John and Eva Esau	1963-75 --
	Sylvester Dirks	1942 *	Vancouver Ethnic Churches	Hindi Punjabi Santosh Kumar and Mayahal Raj	1973- ***
	Nick Goertz, <i>et al.</i>				
	John Goertz	1952-5 **			
	Frank and Pearl Koop	1956-60 ***			
	Walter Heinrichs	1960-1 + +			
	Vern Ratzlaff	1962			
	Henry Penner, Walter Epp and Jake Balzer assisting	1965			
	Victor and Katie Nickel	1965-8			
	A. H. Wieler	1968-70			
		1970 --			
			Bethel Chinese Church	David Poon	1978-

Greek Evangelical	George and Leona Anastasiadas	1976-	Lakeview	Henry and Katherine Nikkel	1978-
Vanderhoof Gospel Chapel	Calvin and Tillie Buehler	1953-1967 ** ***	Lethbridge Community	Ralph and Linda Klassen	1981-
Nechako Community	John and Elaine Hiebert	1963-(to AGC) 1983- ++		Henry Unrau	1979 ++
Whistler Community Church	Ray and Kathy Wiens	1980- ++		Ted and Pat Klassen	1980-
Pemberton Christian Fellowship	Art and Leona Martens	1983-	Medicine Hat Crestwood	Art and Leona Martens	1965-71 *** ++
Williams Lake Caribou Bethel	Paul and Anne Unger	1964-72 *** ++ +		Walter and Selma Epp	1971-3
	John and Bertha Balzer	1973-		Walter Wiens	1973-7
ALBERTA				David Rempel	1977-8
Brooks	John and Elsie Wiebe	1978-	Pincher Creek Foothills Gospel Church	Jacob and Linda Penner	1978-82
	Sylvester and Mattie Dirks	1979- ++		David Durksen	1947-67 ++
Calgary City Mission	Jake and Justina Froese	1953-6***		George and Thelma Dirks	1964
Highland	Abe Rempel, Moderator	1956 ++		George and Elma Reimer	1968-74 ***
	Henry G. and Lydia Thielmann	1957-64		Victor and Katie Nickel	1976-81
	A. P. Regier, Pastor	1959-64		Henry and Katherine Nikkel	1982- ++
Rescue Mission	John Hamm	1964	Red Deer	Marvin and Eunice Schmidt	1982- ++
	Alfred Quiring	1964-5	Tofield	Henry H. Epp	1972-6
	Dave and Anita Esau	1965-6		John M. and Mary Schmidt	1976-80 ++
	Abe and Catharine Rempel	1967-75	ONTARIO		
	Peter Hofer	1967-9	Brampton Mennonite	Ed Janzen	1978-9 *
	Walter and Mary Balzer	1976-81 --		K. J. Weinberger	1979-80 ***
Rosscarrock	Dave Esau	1965-6 *		Rudy Dueckman, Moderator	1980-1
	Peter Hofer	1967-9		Art and Elsie Willms	1981-3 -
	Abe Rempel	1970-	Hamilton/Stoney Creek	John and Mary Unger	1955-61 **
Edmonton Lendrum	Peter Borgen and John Neufeld	1956- *	Christian Fellowship	David and Rose Nickel	1961-2
	Bernard Sawatsky	1957-9		John and Martha Reimer	1962-7 +
	Henry G. and Lydia Thielmann, Calgary	1960	Mountview	Herman and Irene Kroeker	1967-73
	Peter and Mary Rempel	1960-70 ++ +		Norman and Irene Neufeld	1973-9
	George Warkentin	1970-2		Henry and Erika Esau	1980-2 ++
Christian Fellowship	Jake and Irene Isaac	1972-8 --		Jake and Elsie Bergen	1983-
Millwoods	Marvin Schmidt and Dwayne Barkmann	1978- ++	Hampshire/Orillia Christian Fellowship Chapel	Henry and Erica Dick	1950-4 **
Fort McMurray	David Balzer	1968- *		John and Katie Epp	1954-7
"Crossroads"	Roland and Maryanne Balzer	1974-6		Herman and Irene Kroeker	1957-67 ***
	Tim and Bertha Geddert	1978-82 ++		Peter and Betty Klassen	1967-81 ++ +
	Dennis and Peggy Voth	1982-		Phil and Lydia Hamm	1981-4
Hobbema, Louis Bull Indian Reserve	Reinhold and Helen Fast	1973-	Komoka	Rudy and Erica Janzen	1971-2 **
Lakeview	Allen R. and Anne Guenther	1962-5 *** ++		Isaac and Anna Tiessen	1972-3 ++
	William and Kay Thiessen	1965		Rudy and Erica Janzen	1974-8 +
	Henry Loewen	1968		John Letkemann	1978 ***
	Henry Unrau	1972-8	Niagara Falls	Herman and Irene Kroeker	1978- ++
				J. J. Toews	1971-2 *
				Willie and Margaret Baerg	1975-7
				Alfred Friesen and J. Pankratz	1977-8
				Dick and Sharon Hill	1978-81 ++
				Henry and Helen Wiebe	1981-
			Niagara-on-the-Lake Christian Fellowship	C.M. Penner	1954 //
				Jakob Pankratz	1957 *** ++

Niagara-on-the-Lake Christian Fellowship			St. Jerome	Ernest and Lydia Dyck	1961-5 ***
Ed Bauman	1960				++
Jake Neufeld	1964			Don and Joan Balzer	1965-7
Rudy and Irene Bartel	1967			René Hainaut	1969-74
Peter and Eva Loewen	1974			David and Liette Franco	1975-82 +
Gus Quadrizius	1978-			Ernest and Lydia Dyck	1982-
Puslinch Peter Rempel <i>et al.</i>	1957- *		St. Laurent	Ernest Dyck	1967 *
Herb Swartz	1954			David Franco, Danny Wolfe	1970-3 ++
Hardy and Ella Klassen	1954-			Jean Tremblay	1973
Jake and Helen Loewen	1958-65			Ernest Dyck	1973-5
	1965 --			Pierre and Louise	
St. Anns Community				Wingender	1975-80
Henry and Helen Wiebe	1967-81 ++			André and Francine	
Ron Hallmann	1981- -			Bourque	1980-
Simcoe Evergreen Heights			Plateau Mont-Royal	Guy and Suzanne Demers	1984
Jacob Penner	1975 *		Ste. Rose	Jean-Victor Brosseau	1976-7
Bert Friesen	1976-9 +			Ernest Dyck	1977-80 ++
Herman Plett	1979-			Pierre Wingender	1980-1
Spragge Bethesda Fellowship				Albert Hodder	1981-2
Abe Janzen	late 1950s *			Charles and Julie Martin	1981- +
John D. Klassen	? -69		Ste. Thérèse	Ernest and Lydia Dyck	1962 *
Bruno and Helen Toews	1967-73 ***			Clyde and Elizabeth	
Willy and Margaret Baerg	1973-5 ++			Shannon	1962-3
Archie and Erna Jantzen	1975-			Ernest Dyck	1963-5
Toronto Willowdale Christian Fellowship				Don and Joan Balzer	1965-71
Henry H. and Erica Voth	1957-9 * **			Ben Dyck	1967-70 ++
Herbert and Margaret				Ernest Dyck	1971-6 +
Swartz	1959-62 ***			Jean and Francine Theoret	1976-9
Peter and Justina Penner	1962-4			Henry and Helen Derksen	1979-83
Rudy Dueckman,				Pierre and Louise	
Moderator	1964-5			Wingender	1983-
Isaac and Anna Tiessen	1965-71		Waterloo/Knowlton		
Allen and Anne Gunther	1971-4 +		Victory Fellowship		
Ron and June Friesen	1975-80 ++			Sig Polle and CBI students	1974 *
Brampton (see above)				George and Ruth Wiens	1975-7 ++
Yorkdale Community				David and Ruth Taylor	1977-9
Peter and Tina Brown				Rod and Julia Zook	1979-83
(MB/CS)	1979-81 ***				
Alan and Janice Epp	1980-		THE MARITIMES		
QUEBEC					
Ste. Agathe-des-Monts			Dartmouth, Nova Scotia		
Danny and Gladys Wolfe	1972-6 ++ -			Walter and Selma Epp	1967-71 **
Ste. Anne-des-Plaines				Isaac and Shirley Bergen	1971-4 +
Richard and Carole Toupin	1983-			Harold Schroeder	1974-5
Charlesbourg, Quebec City				Hartley and Mareta Smith	1975-80 ++
David and Liette Franco	1982- ++			Henry M. and Mabel	
St. Donat David Franco	1976 *			Willems	1981-2
Jean-Victor and Annie				George and Ruth Wiens	1982-4 ***
Brosseau	1979- ++			John and Judy Dyck	1984-5
St. Eustache Pierre Wingender family	1973 *		Tide Head, New Brunswick	Ewald and Linda Unruh	1985-
Robert and Rita Dagenais	1976- ++ +			Robert and Janice Buhr	1983-5 * +
Grande Riviere and New Richmond				Sieg and Teenie Wall	1985-
Denis and Lyne Tremblay	1981- ++				

SOMETHING ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Peter Penner, researcher and writer, was born in Siberia in 1925 and came to Canada with his parents in the very next year. He grew up in the Mennonite Brethren congregation in Vineland, Ontario. An early high school dropout, he eventually completed high school at Eden Christian College, Beamsville High School, and the St. Catharines Collegiate Institute (1950). He also attended Prairie Bible Institute (1945-47) and before that the Vineland Mennonite Brethren Church Bible School (1939-41). During his years in the Vineland church he sang in choirs, conducted the junior choir, and taught Sunday school and Saturday German school. During the War he did Alternative Service as a conscientious objector (1943-45) in British Columbia and Ontario.

He attended MBBC during the years 1950-53 and earned two degrees: the BRE in 1953 and the ThB in 1957. His other undergraduate degree, the BA (1955), came from the University of Western Ontario (Waterloo College). He earned his MA (1962) and his PhD (1970) at McMaster University in Hamilton. In 1965 he took a lecturer's position in history at Mount Allison University, Sackville, New Brunswick. He now holds rank as Professor of History and

specializes in European and Empire history.

Before that he served in two home mission fields: Lindal, Manitoba (1955-57) and Toronto Mennonite Brethren Church (1962-46), having been ordained to the gospel ministry by the Kitchener Mennonite Brethren church in 1954. He taught in Fraser Valley schools for three years: East Chilliwack Bible School (1957-59) and the MEI (1959-60). He married Justina "Jessie" Janzen in 1949. The Penners have two children, Robert and Ruth, and a daughter-in-law, Angie Parkes. The Penners became members of the Sackville United Church in 1967, though they are known in the United Church as Mennonites. Over the years they have fostered the growth of MAP, Mennonites in the Atlantic Provinces, an annual retreat towards a realization of an Anabaptist-Mennonite presence in Eastern Canada, complete with MCC-appointed personnel and MDS contact men.

Peter Penner has been a frequent contributor since 1956 to Mennonite Brethren and inter-Mennonite papers, and since the 1970s has published articles, reviews, and several books in his professional discipline.

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¹⁶ John Wesley Berg, "Choral Festivals and Choral Workshops Among Mennonites of Manitoba and Saskatchewan, 1900-1960" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Washington, Seattle, 1979), 122-7; Obit. of Edward Horsch, Sr. (1876-1959), *MO* (4 December 1959), 9; *BC* (June 1953), 11; *NDC* (1937), 23; *Manitoba* (June 1945), 27-8; Ben Horsch editorial, *MO* (1 September 1961), 2; Introduction to *The Hymnbook* (1960); Peter Klassen, "The Many Contributions of Ben and Esther Horsch," M.B. Historical Society Newsletter (March 1982), 1-4.

¹⁷ *Manitoba* (September 1936), (June 1939), 3, (May and September 1940), (May 1942).

¹⁸ *Manitoba* (June 1944), 13-4; *NDC* (1944), 50; Janz, *Alberta* (November 1944), 6.

¹⁹ *Manitoba* Conference Journal, UCC (1944), 50-51, UCC Archives, University of Winnipeg (1945) 64-5.

²⁰ Janz to J. B. Toews (23 November 1944), in H. S. Voth Collection, File 16, M.B. Archives; *UCC Yearbook* (1943, 1944, 1945), 565, 573, 571, respectively; Alfred Kroeker, "Our Nelson House Assignment, 1943-46" (1984), 2pp.

²¹ *NDC* (1945), 99; *CC* (1975), 127-144.

²² *NDC* (1945), 98-100; Peters to Janzen (4 September 1947, 7 and 21 November 1947), B 220, M.B. Archives.

IV. CANADAWIDE BROTHERHOOD CONCERNS

¹ H. F. Klassen, *KJ* (March 1944), 2-3.

² *NDC* (1935), 48, (1937), 20, (1938), 23, (1939), 24-6; *Manitoba* (June 1955), 79-83; Study Commission Report re WBS (1970), 75-90; *CC* (1948), 73-7; C. F. Klassen, *KJ* (June 1946), 5, (Sept/Oct. 1955), 5-13; F. C. Peters (May/June 1952), 8-10; Stobbe, *MO* (16 March 1956), 1-8; J. A. Toews, *History*, 265ff.

³ Tiessen, *He Leadeth*, 27-31; Ed Boldt, *A History of the Ontario Conference of M.B. Churches (1957-1982)*, 28-9; A. J. Klassen, *The Bible School Story*; A. J. Stobbe, ed., *South Abbotsford M.B. Church: A History from 1932 to 1981* (1982), 27; Henry Born, *BC* (June 1965), 251; J. A. Toews, *History*, 263-4.

⁴ *KJ* (September 1953-February 1954), 30-1; F. H. Epp, *CM* (5 November 1954), 2; *Manitoba* (June 1956), 78-9; *MO* (13 September 1957), 3; (22 April 1960), 10; *KJ* (Nov/Dec. 1954), 27; *CM* (24 October 1958), 4; Helga (Kutz) Harder to Penner (24 October 1983).

⁵ *CC* (1955), 131-2, 155-6, (1957), 83-91, (1958), 110, (1959), 91, 96, (1960), 49ff., (1961), 123.

⁶ Interview with Peter Bagen (5 July 1982, St. Albert); Wally Sawatsky [son of Bernard], "A Brief History of Lendrum M.B. Church" (September 1977); Urie A. Bender, *Stumbling Heavenward: The Extraordinary Life of an Ordinary Man: Peter Rempel* (Winnipeg, 1984), 150ff.

⁷ *BC* (June 1963), 20, (June 1964), 10; Ron Friesen, "M.B. Church Planting in Vancouver: Sociological Behaviour in an Ethnic Group, 1928-1971" (unpublished M. Div. Research Project, MBBS, 1981), 49.

⁸ Harder to Penner (24 October 1983); *BC* (1968), 16, 27.

⁹ *BC* (1969), 30-1, (1970), 30-1; Harder, *op. cit.*

¹⁰ Penner, *MBH* (20 September 1963-11 December 1964); *Manitoba* (1968), 70-80; *CC* (1969), 58; *Manitoba* (1973), 20, (1976), 63; *MBH* (6 February 1970), 14.

¹¹ *CC* (1948), 94.

¹² Maria Foth, *Beyond the Border: Maria's Miraculous Pilgrimage* (Burlington 1981); For literary reflections of this time, see Ingrid Rimland, *The Wanderers: The Saga of Three Women Who Survived* (St. Louis 1977); and Rudy Wiebe, *The Blue Mountains of China* (Toronto 1970); F. H. Epp, *Mennonite Exodus* (Altona 1962), 443; *25 Years in Retrospect: M.B. Church of St. Catharines* (1968), 46 pp.

¹³ J. A. Toews, "A Legitimate Compromise," *MO* (7 April 1961), 2; *History*, 162, 173-4; Boldt, *Ontario*, 62; Ron Friesen, 30ff.

¹⁴ A. A. Toews, *KJ* (Sept-Oct. 1952), 3-4; H. F. Klassen, "Wollen wir Mennoniten bleiben?" *KH* (Jan/Feb. 1952), 2.

¹⁵ Jacob P. Bekker, *Origins of the M.B. Church* (Hillsboro 1973, translation of an 1890 account and documents), 17ff, 43ff; Unruh, "Das Durchbrechen

...," *Voice* (July-August 1953), 12-7.

¹⁶ J. A. Toews, *History*, 339-40; *MO* (16 August 1957), 2.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*; cf. *CC* (1954), 85-6, (1958), 154-5.

¹⁸ A. E. Janzen, *M. B. Distinctives* (Hillsboro 1966); cf. *CL* (10 May 1966), 3-5; J. A. Toews, *History*, 361ff.

¹⁹ *GC/MB* (1945), 27, 67-9, (1954), 23-31, 128-133, (1957), 105; Toews, *History*, 205ff; K-H, *AFCL* (1975), 295.

²⁰ *CC* (1949), 67, 76-81.

²¹ *CC* (1955), 64-8, (1958), 45-8, (1959), 47-50, 164, (1960), 88ff, 203ff, (1967), 17.

²² *NDC* (1934), 17; *CC* (1948), 103-5; cf. NSDC (1934), 3, BF 110, M.B. Archives; *Ontario* (November 1944), 8-9; H. H. Janzen, *MR* (20, 27 April and 4 May 1977), 10; *NDC* (1944), 49; *CC* (1947), 36, (1949), 80-1.

²³ *CC* (1949), 7; *BC* (November 1958), 4-6; *RTOU*, 77ff.

²⁴ *Ontario* (1951), 52; Louise Buller to Penner (November 1983); *NDC* (1944), 49; *CC* (1947), 36, (1948), 103, (1951), 31-2, (1953), 29-30, (1955), 64-8; Erich Ratzlaff, *Ein Leben fuer den Herrn: Biographie und Predigten von David Borisovich Wiens* (Winnipeg 1982), 177pp; H. Jantz, "Uniquely Prepared for a Far-flung Ministry," *MBH* (13 March 1981), 18-9.

²⁵ *NDC* (1925), 37, (1929), 29; Interview with Jacob H. Pankratz (28 May 1982, St. Catharines).

²⁶ Unruh, *Geschichte*, 726-731; *Manitoba* (1946), 20, (1947), 38; *GC/MB* (1948), 46; *CC* (1953), 32-5; Jacob Pankratz, "Die goettliche Ordnung mit Juden und Heiden," *KJ* (December 1946), 20-22.

²⁷ *CC* (1954), 6-10, 136, (1956), 91-2.

²⁸ Interview with Pankratz, also a written career-statement by Margaret Pankratz, 1982.

²⁹ *CC* (1950), 46-7, (1951), 29, (1952), 52; *RTOU*, 81ff.

³⁰ H. S. Voth collection, File 19, M.B. Archives.

³¹ H. A. Willems, "Klarlegung der Prinzipien u. Arbeitsgrundsätze der WCM" (c. 1944), 5; "Constitution for Mission Churches Supported by the M.B. Conference" (c. 1952), WCM Collection, BBI Archives; *Manitoba* (1947), 9-10; I. Thiessen of the Ontario FSK (7 March 1953), BD 220, M.B. Archives; *Ontario* (November 1953), 4; John L. Tipping, "The Invasion of Menno Simons," *KJ* (Jan/Apr. 1953), 15-9; H. Regehr to G. Penner, FSK Minutes (13 November 1952), B 220, M.B. Archives.

³² *Alberta* (1961), 24-7, 55ff.

V. SOME CANADAWIDE VOLUNTARIST ELEMENTS OF OUTREACH

¹ George W. Elliott, *The Story of the Western Tract Mission* (n.d.), 24pp.; "The Manner, Method and Message of the WTM," *MBH* (12 February 1965), 15; *KJ* (August 1946), 18-9, (April 1948), 3; FSK (10 April 1946, 5 May 1947), 7, B 220, M.B. Archives; *CC* (1946), 71-2, 166, (1947), 159-162, (1955), 132; C. C. Peters/H. S. Rempel, in H. S. Rempel Collection, M.B. Archives; *Manitoba* (1949), 57; D. E. Hiebert, *CL* (1 and 15 July 1951).

² Peter Klassen editorial, *MBH* (24 August 1972), 9.

³ *KJ* (Jul/Aug 55), 13-4, May/Jun. 1956), 14, (Nov/Dec. 1954), 16; *Sunday School Times* article reprinted in *KJ* (Oct/Dec. 1948), 55-6; 25th Anniversary of the Back to the Bible Broadcast, *Good News Broadcaster* (May 1964), 2-3.

⁴ The references to radio are too numerous to list, but see *KJ* (April 1948), (April 1950/April 1951), Mar/Apr. 1956), 1; Stobbe editorial, *MO* (22 February 1957), 2; "Survey of Radio Work in Canadian Conference," *CC* (1963), 119-120; "Mass Communications," special issue of the *CM* (7 March 1967); *MBH* (28 January 1966), 13.

⁵ *CM* (7 March 1967), 17-18.

⁶ *Manitoba* (June 1954), 48-50; *CM* (26 February 1960), 7-14; Taped interview with Henry Brucks (3 August 1982, Winnipeg).

⁷ George Derksen, *MO* (26 February 1960), 7-12; *Manitoba* (1961), 29-32.

⁸ *BC* (November 1955), 21; Esther Horsch, *CM* (29 June 1962), 2; Helmut Janzen, *MBH* (19 February 1965), 3; *CC* (1947), 131, (1961), 72.

⁹ F. H. Epp, *CM* (12 March 1954), 2, (10 June 1955), 2; "M.B. Form a Chain of Urban Churches [in the North]," *MRep* (5 August 1974), 9; Stobbe, *MO* (21 September 1955), 3, (14 September 1956), 2; *RTOU*, 89-94.

¹⁰ Epp, *MRep* (5 August 1974), 9.

¹¹ Ron Friesen, "Vancouver: Sociological Behaviour," 17-46; Jim Friesen and Roy Vogt "The Mennonite Community in Winnipeg," in *ML* (January 1964), 13-15; *Manitoba* (1975), 105.

¹² John Unger, "The Significance of DVBS to the M.B. Conference of Ontario" (unpublished B.D. paper, Goshen College Biblical Seminary, 1964), 1; John A. Barbour, *They That Be Wise: The Story of the CSSM (1926-1951)* (n.d., c. 1952), 133pp.

¹³ Henry Warkentin, "The Childrens' Missionary Movement in Canada, 1925 to the Present," in *Another Look at the M.B. Church*, a compilation edited by Henry Brucks (November 1983); NSDC (1938-46), BF 110, M.B. Archives; *Ontario* (1945), 9; *Manitoba* (June 1945), 5-9; *Saskatchewan* (June 1946); *Alberta* (November 1945), 7-8, 12, 18.

¹⁴ Mrs. Arthur Dick, *MO* (8 August 1958), 11; John Unger, *op. cit.*; *Ontario* (1967), 75ff; Penner, "The Childrens' Missionary Movement," in *Another Look* (1983).

¹⁵ J. H. Friesen, *BC* (November 1961), 27-9; J. Dyck, *Alberta* (1960), 41; Victor Adrian, *Manitoba* (1964), 48-62, (1960), 36-9.

¹⁶ Interview with Henry Willems (15 July 1982, Hepburn).

¹⁷ Pries, *Peniel*, 175; Wally Kroeker, *Camp Arnes, the First 25 Years* (1975), 3, 5; Jess Kaufman, *The Vision and the Legacy* (Newton 1983), 27-8.

- ¹⁸ E. Neufeld, *KJ* (Oct/Nov. 1949), 18-19.
¹⁹ Walter Wiebe, *KJ* (May/Aug. 1953), 13-4; *MO* (19 August 1960), 3; *MBH* (15 June 1973), 27; Alma Neufeld and Marie Schultz, *KJ* (Feb/Ap. 1949), 12-41; 18-9; Special Camp Issue, *CM* (14 May 1968), 1, 5-7.
²⁰ George Derksen, "A Vision That Produced a Camp," *MO* (24 July 1959), 5, 11; Kroeker, *Arnes*, 33pp.; H. R. Baerg, *MO* (17 October 1958), 4.
²¹ Pries, *Peniel*, 175-6; J. Nikkel, *CM* (14 May 1968), 7; John Boldt, *MO* (31 August 1956), 3, (16 August 1957), 3, 5.
²² *KJ* (July/Aug. 1954), 25; *MBH* (23 August 1968), 14-5.
²³ *BC* (June 1955), 20-1; Penner, *MO* (31 October 1958), 4; Nick Dyck, *MO* (7 August 1959), 5.
²⁴ *Alberta* (June 1956), 42-3, (1958), 28-9.
²⁵ Kroeker, *Arnes*, 12-13, 25-6.

VI. THE MISSION CHURCH ERA IN THE PROVINCES, 1945-1960

A. MANITOBA (Note: All references are from *Manitoba* Conference yearbooks unless otherwise indicated).

- ¹ (June 1944), 13, (June 1946), 3-10, 26, (October 1946), 9-22, (June 1948), 11-2; Jantz, "Mother of Many — Anna Thiessen [dead at age 85]," *MBH* (25 April 1977), 16.
² (October 1943), 5, (June 1946), 26.
³ (1956), 16, (1957), 4-7.
⁴ (1958), 21, (1959), 52, (1962), 5-7.
⁵ (June 1947), 21-5; *KJ* (October 1946), 9; Baldie Berg, ed., *Our I-6 Heritage* (Morden 1976), 1, 61-7 (and numerous family pictures).
⁶ Abe and Helen Goerz, *KJ* (May/June 1952), 6; Penner, *KJ* (Nov/Dec. 1956), 14-5; Note: Jake Kehler would not allow Olaf Eriksen to preach in the Lindal church. "He did a very detrimental work," from Kehler's point of view; Kehler to Penner (1983); (June 1952), 23-6, (1953), 9-10, 23-6, (1954), 22-7, (1955), 37-9; Harry Guderian, *MO* (25 November 1955), 3; Penner, *MO* (9 March 1956), 5, (5 October 1956); "First Baptism in Seven Years" (26 July 1957), 1, 4.
⁷ (1958), 9ff, (1960-7); Jantz editorial, "Conversation at Lindal," *MBH* (11 February 1966), 4, 13.
⁸ H. S. Rempel Preaching Diaries, M.B. Archives.
⁹ (1950), 20, 25-26.
¹⁰ (June 1948), 25-6, 31-4; Marie Wiebe, "The True Story of a Tract," *KJ* (May/Aug. 1955), 23; Marion Dyck, "Chapel Dedication at Ashern," *MO* (2 November 1956), 3; Hedy Durksen, *Along Highways and Hedges: The Story of Joe and Marie Wiebe* (Winnipeg 1977), 183pp.
¹¹ (1959), 30, 39, (1960), 22; Interview with Joe and Marie Wiebe (13 August 1981, Winnipeg).
¹² (June 1944), 12-13; Harry Loewen, *MO* (28 September 1955), 7; C. A. Friesen, *MO* (7 September 1961), 10; *MBH* (21 June 1963), 15; (11 February 1966), 5-6; (June 1948), 24-8, (1965-9); Interview with Joe and Marie Wiebe.
¹³ (1954-65); Cleo Heinrichs, "Merger of an Historic Congregation," *MBH* (4 December 1964), 6-7; Interview with Abe Quiring (4 August 1982, Winnipeg); *MBH* (7 October 1983), 14.
¹⁴ *MO* (7 December 1956), 1, 4, (14 December 1956), 1; (1959), 33-4, (1960), 28-9, (1961), 50, (1962), 30-1.
¹⁵ Interview with Abe Quiring; Tina Doerksen, *Historical Sketch . . . of Carman Gospel Light Church* (31 May 1981), 8pp.
¹⁶ (June 1945), 9.
¹⁷ Hedy Durksen, 53-6.
¹⁸ (1950-5); William Schroeder, Jr., to Penner (14 May 1982).
¹⁹ (1936), 46, (June 1946), 32-3, (October 1946), 14-15, (1951), 36-7; Margaret Nikkel, "Manitoba Home Mission Work of Jacob J. Nikkel" (1983), 3pp.
²⁰ (1946-55).
²¹ (1955), 47-8.
²² *Ibid.*; Interview with John Regehr (28 July 1981, Winnipeg).
²³ (1951), 46; Penner, "Survey," 75-6.
²⁴ Anna Thiessen, 44-5; (1952), 59, (1946-50); William Falk Obit., *MBH* (13 June 1969), 24.
²⁵ (1952), 29-32, (1956), 31, (1957), 81-3, (1965), 7, (1971), 90-3; Henry Regehr, Jr., "Obeying the Great Commission in Winnipeg," *KJ* (Nov/Dec. 1954), 26; "Union Gospel Mission: They Take Them Off the Street," *MO* (30 March 1956), 8.
²⁶ (1951), 40, (1959), 26, 39; Anna Thiessen, 104; Jantz, "Mother of Many . . ." *MBH* (25 April 1977), 16.
²⁷ (1955), 25-8, (1956), 9, 36-9, (1960), 25-6; Otto Funk, *MO* (3 June 1960), 3.
²⁸ *MBH* (21 December 1979), 17; Interview with Mrs. David Penner (4 June 1982, Brandon).
B. SASKATCHEWAN (Note: All references are from *Saskatchewan* Conference yearbooks, unless otherwise indicated, and so on, with reference to other provinces, also).
¹ *NDC* (1936), 48, (1945), 78-81; *CC* (1946), 64-7.
² *BK* (1943), 27, (1945), 13-4; NSDC (1935-43), BF 110, M.B. Archives; WCM Collection, (1937-1940), BBI Archives; The WCM *Challenger* (Aug/Oct 1942), (Nov/Dec 1945), 7; *GC/MB* (1953), 15; (1945), 18.
³ Interview with Peter Ewert (16 June 1982); M. Epp, *Proclaim Jubilee*, 55.
⁴ H. A. Willems (1944 and 1952, *op. cit.*); "Vorlage zur Einverleibung . . . [Brief for Incorporation]" (11 June 1946), WCM Collection, BBI Archives; cf. (1966), 21-30; *CC* (1946), 65-7, (June 1952), (1953), 21-6, (1962), 24; J. S. Adrian, *KJ* (Nov/Dec 1956), 17.

⁵ For an historical overview, maps, leadership profiles, see *MBH* (28 September 1979), 2-13.

- ⁶ Rudy Wiebe, "Tombstone Community," *ML* (October 1964), 150-3.
⁷ *Challenger* (hereafter *Ch*) (Mar/Apr 1953), 3-4, (Mar/Apr 1956), 6, (May/June 1957), 5, 8; Interview with Rudy and Erica Janzen (16 August 1982, Kitchener); J. J. Thiessen, *MBH* (17 May 1963), 10, (4 September 1964), 7.
⁸ *Ch* (Jan/Feb 1949), 7, (Nov/Dec 1953), 3, (Nov/Dec 1967); NSDC (27 September 1941), 4b; (1964), 14; Norman and Mary Fehr, *KJ* (Jan/Apr 1953), 34; Penner, "Survey," 52-3; A. J. Siebert, *MBH* (7 November 1980), 6-7. Interview with Ben Hoeppner (16 July 1982, Warman).
⁹ *MO* (13 September 1957), 1, (22 November 1957), 3; Note from Neil Funk to Penner (1981).
¹⁰ Letter from A. B. Voth to Penner (8 October 1982).
¹¹ *Ch* (Aug/Oct. 1942), (Jan/Feb. 1943), Mar/Apr. 1944), 5, (Mar/Apr. 1947), 7, (Nov/Dec. 1951), 3; Victor Nickel, *KJ* (Jan/Apr. 1953), 35-6; Hedy Dick, "Theodore Martens," *KJ* (September 1953-September 1954), 10-1; J. H. Kehler to Penner (1983); M. Epp, 50; (1964), 8-10, (1965), 9, (1968), 24.
¹² *Ch*, (Nov/Dec. 1945), 7, (Jul/Aug. 1952), 3, 5, 7, (Nov/Dec 1953), 4-5, (Jan/Feb. 1956); (1969), 15-6; Note from Mrs. Menno Lepp to Penner (1982), and letter (2 December 1983).
¹³ *Ch* (March 1952-June 1956); (1954), 9-10; Mrs. Milfred Wall, "Charred Forest Becomes Church," *MBH* (6 September 1968), 17-8, (19 August 1977), 14-5; Interview with Reuben Neudorf (13 July 1982, Meadow Lake).
¹⁴ *Ch* (Jan/Feb 1952), 8; Mary L. Baerg, *MO* (24 March 1961), 3-4; *MBH* (4 September 1954), 5; Carroll Hill, NCEM representative, Newcastle, N.B., to Penner (28 March 1984).
¹⁵ (1962), 15-16.
¹⁶ *CC* (1955), 121-3; Peter J. Esau, *MO* (6 January 1956), 5; *MO* (15 June 1956), 1, 9; Interview with Peter Esau (14 June 1982, Clearbrook); *MBH* (16 September 1966), 11.
¹⁷ Adeline Berg, *MBH* (6 February 1970), 20-1, (28 September 1979), 8; *The Edmonton Journal*, reprinted in the *CM* (25 September 1970), 4.
¹⁸ *CC* (1946), 44-7; (1950), 10-14; *Ch* (Jan/Feb. 1954), 3-5, (Nov/Dec. 1956); *MO* (20 February 1959), 31; *BC* (November 1962), 17; Interview with Nick Willems (28 June 1982, Prince George).
¹⁹ *Ch* (Nov/Dec 1953), 8, (Jan/Feb. 1955), 2-4; *CM* (4 December 1953), 1; *MO* (20 February 1959), 3; (1963), 11, (1971), 31-2; W. Kroeker, *MBH* (21 February 1969), 12; Questionnaire from David Niessen (1984).
²⁰ *NDC* (1934), 14, 83; *CC* (1948), 133; Interview with Lawrence Redekopp (18 July 1982, Lanigan), (1954), 20-2; Adina Peters, *MO* (13 July 1956), 3; Alvin Penner to J. S. Adrian (11 October 1956), BF 121, M.B. Archives.
²¹ J. S. Adrian to Penner (1982), 2pp.
²² *Ibid.*; (1960), 18, (1963), 14-5, (1964), 30; Interview with Frank Rempel (6 June 1982, Swift Current).
²³ *Missionary Album* (Hillsboro 1954); *CH* (May/June 1949), 8; Interview with J. H. Epp and Frank Froese, *op. cit.*, Nick Willems, "WCM, Summer Camps and Other Activities," *KJ* (March 1946), 14-6.
²⁴ M. Epp, 8, 50-5; (1967), 32; "The Building of Bethany," *The Ray* (BBI Yearbook) (1973), 33-41; *Ch* (Jul/Aug 1949), 7; Gordon Nickel, *MBH* (28 September 1979), 1.

C. BRITISH COLUMBIA

- ¹ G. H. Sukkau to the BC/IMK (May 1945), BB 100, M.B. Archives; *RTOU*, 125 pp.
² Henry Warkentin (November 1955), 8-17; Interview with John E. and Leona Klassen (17 June 1982, Clearbrook).
³ *CC* (1955), 144-9; questionnaire returns (1982-84), 126 out of a possible 150, an 84% return (see p. 157).
⁴ (June 1961), 31; *RTOU*, 89; *MBH* (14 June 1963), 7.
⁵ (November 1959), 18-9.
⁶ (12 August 1934), 25, and C. C. Peters (2 May 1944), BB 100, M.B. Archives; (May 1950), 3-6, (November 1955), 3-6; W. M. Klassen, *KJ* (Sept/Oct. 1952), 7; *MO* (7 March 1958), 5-6, 11.
⁷ Pacific Grace Mission File, CBI Archives; Klassen, Brandt, Neufeld, "Rescuing the Perishing in B.C.'s Metropole," *MO* (7 March 1958), 5-6; Note from Klassen to Penner (1982).
⁸ IMK (21 June 1942), BB 100, M.B. Archives; Mrs. Henry Warkentin, *KJ* (Jul/Aug. 1955), 29; *RTOU*, 43, 60-1; (June 1960), 19-20; Telephone Conversation with Frank Koop (30 June 1982, Charlie Lake); (November 1962), 12; Interview with Walter Epp (4 July 1982, Edmonton); (1968), 22, (1970), 23.
⁹ *RTOU*, 20-1, 32, 38, 105-6; John Reimer, "Evangelistic Campaign in Harrison," *MO* (4 November 1955), 1.
¹⁰ (November 1962-1966); J. H. Friesen, "Harrison Hot Springs — by the Healing Waters," *MBH* (10 May 1968), 8; (1972-73); Interview with John Reimer (24 June 1982, Sardis).
¹¹ Peter Klassen, *KJ* (September 1953-February 1954), 45; *RTOU*, 29, 42; N. and E. Dyck, *MO* (18 October 1957), 3; (June and November 1958), 10, 40, respectively; Minutes of the Board of WCCM (30 November 1959), Papers of the MBM/BC, CBI Archives.
¹² (November 1962), 12-3, (November 1963), 32-3; J. Block, "Home Missions: Constant Re-evaluation Necessary," *MBH* (14 June 1963), 7.
¹³ (June 1955), 12-13; *RTOU*, 28, 40.
¹⁴ *RTOU*, 67-8; (November 1959), 41; John Reimer, *MO* (8 April 1960), 1, 9; *MBH* (8 August 1980), 15, (19 November 1980), 15-16.

- ¹⁵ (November 1959), 4, 15-17, 49, (June 1960), 14, (1969), 14, 21, (1971), 22-3, (1979), 9, 42; Hilda Janzen, *MO* (23 November 1956), 12; *RTOU*, 29, 42, 59-60.
- ¹⁶ (November 1955), 16-17, (November 1958), 11; Marlene Penner, "God-given Impulse Results in Mission," *MO* (3 August 1956), 5, 8; *RTOU*, 28, 41, 66.
- ¹⁷ Penner, "Survey," 97-8; *RTOU*, 34-5, 51-2; (November 1963), 24, 37, (June 1964), 12, (1965), 10, (1970), 22; Mrs. K. Rempel, *MBH* (23 October 1964), 14-15.
- ¹⁸ (November 1958), 4-6, (November 1962), 14-15; *RTOU*, 78-81; George Martens, *KJ* (Sept/Oct. 1955), 14; *MO* (12 October 1956), 3; (1968), 20, (1975), 33.
- ¹⁹ F. H. Epp, "M.B. Form a Chain of Urban Churches," *MRep* (5 August 1974), 9.
- ²⁰ Calvin Buehler, *KJ* (Nov/Dec. 1956), 8.
- ²¹ Epp, "Vanderhoof . . ." *MRep* (24 June 1974), 9; James A. Griffith, Neil Klassen, Johnny Martens to MBM/BC (14 November 1962), CBI Archives; (June 1963), 9-10.
- ²² J. H. Friesen (November 1962), 9; Interview with Laura Klassen (29 June 1982, Vanderhoof), and Statement re AGC's "Double in a Decade Program," and Neil and Laura Klassen's written response (1982).
- ²³ Rudy Janzen (June 1964), 9.
- ²⁴ Dave Epp, *MO* (14 March 1958), 5, 8; (November 1961), 8, (June 1962), 14, (June 1964), 9; "Mining for God in Hazelton," *MBH* (19 September 1975), 20; *MBH* (13 May 1977), 9; George Braun to Penner (13 August 1982).
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NO LONGER AT ARMS LENGTH

MENNONITE BRETHREN CHURCH PLANTING IN CANADA

The Mennonite Brethren have been in Canada for some 100 years. During this time they have built churches across the whole country. How was it done? Who was involved? What are the ramifications of these many years of mission outreach and church planting?

These and other questions are the background for **No Longer at Arm's Length**. Penner provides us with a well-woven fabric with picturesque designs that trace the history, not only of churches, but of individuals who spent many years in church ministries so that God's church could grow.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Peter Penner, Professor of History at Mount Allison University, Sackville, New Brunswick, has spent numerous years in several provinces working in Home Missions. His keen interest in history, and his special ties with the Home Missions efforts of the Mennonite Brethren, well qualify him to tackle this immense project.

Dr. Penner is the author of several other historical works. This is his first book with Kindred Press.

